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59th year of publication

The myth of moderate Islam

Patrick Sookhdeo

The funeral of British suicide bomber Shehzad Tanweer was held in absentia in his family's ancestral village, near Lahore, Pakistan. Thousands of people attended, as they did again the following day when a qul ceremony was held for Tanweer. During qul, the Koran is recited to speed the deceased's journey to paradise, though in Tanweer's case this was hardly necessary. Being a shahid (martyr), he is deemed to have gone straight to paradise. The 22-year-old from Leeds, whose bomb at Aldgate station killed seven people, was hailed by the crowd as 'a hero of Islam'.

Some in Britain cannot conceive that a suicide bomber could be a hero of Islam. Since 7/7 many have made statements to attempt to explain what seems to them a contradiction in terms. Since the violence cannot be denied, their only course is to argue that the connection with Islam is invalid. The deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Brian Paddick, said that 'Islam and terrorists are two words that do not go together.' His boss, the Commissioner Sir Ian Blair, asserted that there is nothing wrong with being a fundamentalist Muslim.

But surely we should give enough respect to those who voluntarily lay down their lives to accept what they themselves say about their motives. If they say they do it in the name of Islam, we must believe them. Is it not the height of illiberalism and arrogance to deny them the right to define themselves?

On 8 July the London-based *Muslim Weekly* unblushingly published a lengthy opinion article



Hasib Hussain - one of the London bombers

by Abid Ullah Jan entitled "Islam, Faith and Power". The gist of the article is that Muslims should strive to gain political and military power over non-Muslims, that warfare is obligatory for all Muslims, and that the Islamic state, Islam and Sharia (Islamic law) should be established throughout the world. All is supported with quotations from the Koran. It concludes with a veiled threat to Britain. The bombings the previous day were a perfect illustration of what Jan was advocating, and the editor evidently felt no need to withdraw the article or to apologize for it. His newspaper is widely read and distributed across the UK.

By far the majority of Muslims today live their lives without recourse to violence, for the Koran is like a pick-and-mix selection. If you want peace, you can find peaceable verses. If you want war, you can find bellicose verses. You can find verses which permit only defensive jihad, or you can

find verses to justify offensive jihad.

You can even find texts which specifically command terrorism, the classic one being Q8:59-60, which urges Muslims to prepare themselves to fight non-Muslims, "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies" (A. Yusuf Ali's translation). Pakistani Brigadier S.K. Malik's book

The Quranic Concept of War is widely used by the military of various Muslim countries. Malik explains Koranic teaching on strategy: "In war our main objective is the opponent's heart or soul, our main weapon of offence against this objective is the strength of our own souls, and to launch such an attack, we have to keep terror away from our own hearts.... Terror struck into the hearts of the enemies is not only a means, it is the end itself. Once a condition of terror into the opponent's heart is obtained, hardly anything is left to be achieved. It is the point where the means and the end meet and merge. Terror is not a means of imposing decision on the enemy; it is the decision we wish to impose on him."

If you permit yourself a little judicious cutting, the range of choice in Koranic teaching is even wider. A verse one often hears quoted as part of the "Islam is peace" litany allegedly runs

along the lines: "If you kill one soul it is as if you have killed all mankind." But the full and unexpurgated version of Q5:32 states: "If anyone slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people." The very next verse lists a selection of savage punishments for those who fight the Muslims and create "mischief" (or in some English translations "corruption") in the land, punishments which include execution, crucifixion or amputation.

What kind of 'mischief in the land' could merit such a reaction? Could it be interpreted as secularism, democracy and other non-Islamic values in a land? Could the "murder" be the killing of Muslims in Iraq? Just as importantly, do the Muslims who keep quoting this verse realize what a deception they are imposing on their listeners?

It is probably true that in every faith ordinary people will pick the parts they like best and practise those, while the scholars will work out an official version. In Islam the scholars had a particularly challenging task, given the mass of contradictory texts within the Koran. To meet this challenge they developed the rule of abrogation, which states that wherever contradictions are found, the later-dated text abrogates the earlier one. To elucidate further the original intention of

London's "Bobbies," once famed for not carrying firearms, sported automatic weapons after the bombings

Mohammed, they referred to traditions (hadith) recording what he himself had said and done.

Sadly for the rest of the world, both these methods led Islam away from peace and towards war. For the peaceable verses of the Koran are almost all earlier, dating from Mohammed's time in Mecca, while those which advocate war and violence are almost all later, dating from after his flight to Medina. Though jihad has a variety of meanings, including a spiritual struggle against sin, Mohammed's own example shows clearly that he frequently interpreted jihad as literal warfare and himself ordered massacre, assassination and torture. From these sources the Islamic scholars developed a detailed theology dividing the world into two parts, Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Islam, with Muslims required to change Dar al-Harb into Dar al-Islam either through warfare or da'wa (mission).

So the mantra 'Islam is peace' is almost 1,400 years out of date. It was only for about 13 years that Islam was peace and nothing but

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News

The myth of moderate Islam ... continued from p. 1

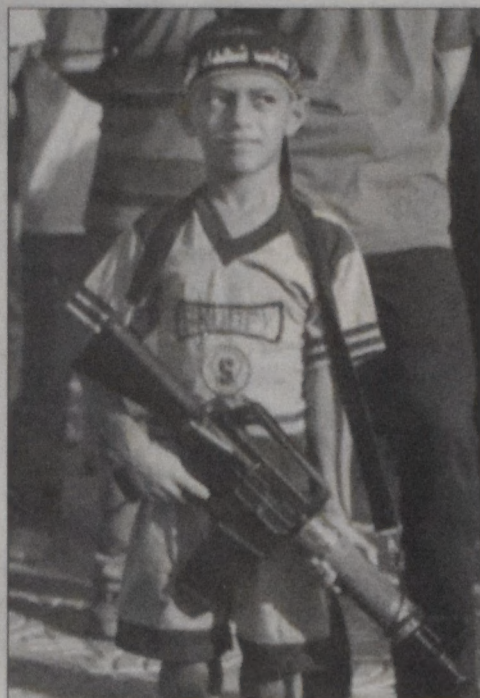
peace. From 622 onwards it became increasingly aggressive, albeit with periods of peaceful co-existence, particularly in the colonial period, when the theology of war was not dominant. For today's radical Muslims – just as for the mediaeval jurists who developed classical Islam – it would be truer to say "Islam is war". One of the most radical Islamic groups in Britain, al-Ghurabaa, stated in the wake of the two London bombings, 'Any Muslim that denies that terror is a part of Islam is kafir.' A kafir is an unbeliever (i.e., a non-Muslim), a term of gross insult.

In the words of Muntir Badr Haloum, a liberal Muslim who lectures at a Syrian university, "Ignominious terrorism exists, and one cannot but acknowledge its being Islamic." While many individual Muslims choose to live their personal lives only by the (now abrogated) peaceable verses of the Koran, it is vain to deny the pro-war and pro-terrorism doctrines within their religion.

Could it be that the young men who committed suicide were neither on the fringes of Muslim society in Britain, nor following an eccentric and extremist interpretation of their faith, but rather that they came from the very core of the Muslim community and were motivated by a mainstream interpretation of Islam?

Muslims who migrated to the UK came initially for economic reasons, seeking employment. But over the last 50 years their communities have evolved away from assimilation with the British majority towards the creation of separate and distinct entities, mimicking the communalism of the British Raj. As a Pakistani friend of mine who lives in London said recently, "The British gave us all we ever asked for; why should we complain?" British Muslims now have Sharia in areas of finance and mortgages; halal food in schools, hospitals and prisons; faith schools funded by the state; prayer rooms in every police station in London; and much more. This process has been assisted by the British government through its philosophy of multiculturalism, which has allowed some Muslims to consolidate and create a parallel society in the UK.

The Muslim community now inhabits principally the urban centres of England as well as some parts of Scotland and Wales.



Al-qaqa-boy

It forms a spine running down the centre of England from Bradford to London, with ribs extending east and west. It is said that within 10 to 15 years most British cities in these areas will have Muslim-majority populations, and will be under local Islamic political control, with the Muslim community living under Sharia.

What happens after this stage depends on which of the two main religious traditions among Pakistani-background British Muslims gains the ascendancy. The Barelwi majority believe in a slow evolution, gradually consolidating their Muslim societies, and finally achieving an Islamic state. The Deobandi minority argue for a quicker process using politics and violence to achieve the same result. Ultimately, both believe in the goal of an Islamic state in Britain where Muslims will govern their own affairs and, as the finishing touch, everyone else's affairs as well. Islamism is now the dominant voice in contemporary Islam, and has become the seedbed of the radical movements. It is this that Sir Ian Blair has not grasped. For some time now the British government has been quoting a figure of 1.6 million for the Muslim population. Muslims themselves claim around 3 million, and this is likely to be far nearer to the truth. The growth of the Muslim community comes from their high birth rate, primary immigration, and asylum-seekers both official and unofficial. There are also

conversions to Islam.

The violence which is endemic in Muslim societies such as Pakistan is increasingly present in Britain's Muslim community. Already we have violence by Pakistani Muslims against Kurdish Muslims, by Muslims against non-Muslims living among them (Caribbean people in the West Midlands, for example), a rapid growth in honor killings, and now suicide bombings. It is worth noting that many conflicts around the world are not internal to the Muslim community but external, as Muslims seek to gain

territorial control, for example, in south Thailand, the southern Philippines, Kashmir, Chechnya and Palestine. Is it possible that a conflict of this nature could occur in Britain?

Muslims must stop this self-deception. They must with honesty recognize the violence that has existed in their history in the same way that Christians have had to do, for Christianity has a very dark past. Some Muslims have, with great courage, begun to do this.

Secondly, they must look at the reinterpretation of their texts, the Koran, hadith and Sharia, and the reformation of their faith. Muntir Badr Haloum has described this as "exorcising" the terrorism from Islam. Mahmud Muhammad Taha argued for a distinction to be drawn between the Meccan and the Medinan sections of the Koran. He advocated a return to peaceable Meccan Islam, which he argued is applicable to today, whereas the bellicose Medinan teachings should be consigned to history. For

taking this position he was tried for apostasy, found guilty and executed by the Sudanese government in 1985. Another modernist reformer was the Pakistani Fazlur Rahman, who advocated the "double movement"; i.e., understanding Koranic verses in their context, their ratio legis, and then using the philosophy of the Koran to interpret that in a modern, social and moral sense. Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd, an Egyptian professor who argued similarly that the Koran and hadith should be interpreted according to the context in which they originated, was charged with apostasy, found guilty in June 1995 and ordered to separate from his wife.

The US-based Free Muslims Coalition, which was set up after 9/11 to promote a modern and secular version of Islam, has proposed the following:

1. A re-interpretation of Islam for the 21st century, where terrorism is not justified under any circumstances.
2. Separation of religion and state.
3. Democracy as the best form of government.
4. Secularism in all forms of political activity.
5. Equality for women.
6. Religion to be a personal relationship between the individual and his or her God, not to be forced on anyone.

This tempting vision of an Islam reformed along such lines is unlikely to be achieved except by a long and painful process of small steps. What might these be and how can we make a start? One step would be, as urged by the Prince of Wales, that every Muslim should "condemn these atrocities [the London bombings] and root out those among them who preach and practise such hatred and bitterness". Universal condemnation of suicide bombers instead of acclamation as heroes would indeed be an excellent start.

Mansoor Ijaz has suggested a practical three-point action plan:

1. Forbid radical hate-filled preaching in British mosques. Deport imams who fail to comply.
2. Scrutinize British Islamic charities to identify those that fund terrorism. Prevent them receiving more than 10 per cent of their income from overseas.
3. Form community-watch groups comprising Muslim citizens to contribute useful information on fanatical Muslims to the authorities.

To this could be added Muslim acceptance of a secular society as the basis for their religious existence, an oath of allegiance to the Crown which would override their allegiance to their co-religionists overseas, and deliberate steps to move out of their ghetto-style existence both physically and psychologically.

For the British government, the time has come to accept Trevor Phillips's statement that multiculturalism is dead. We need to rediscover and affirm a common British identity. This would impinge heavily on the future development of faith schools, which should now be stopped.

Given the fate of some earlier would-be reformers, perhaps King Abdullah of Jordan or a leader of his stature might have the best chance of initiating a process of modernist reform. The day before the bombings he was presiding over a conference of senior scholars from eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence, and, amazingly, they issued a statement endorsing fatwas forbidding any Muslim from those eight schools to be declared an apostate. So reform is possible. The only problem with this particular action is that it may have protected Muslim leaders from being killed by dissident Muslims, but it negated a very helpful fatwa which had been issued in March by the Spanish Islamic scholars declaring Osama bin Laden an apostate. Could not the King re-convene his conference and ask them to issue a fatwa banning violence against non-Muslims also? This would extend the self-preservation of the Muslim community to the whole non-Muslim world.

Such reform – the changing of certain fairly central theological principles – will not be easy to achieve. It will be a long, hard road for Islam to get its house in order so that it can co-exist peacefully with the rest of society in the 21st century.

Patrick Sookhdeo is the International Director of the Barnabas Fund and the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity. He holds a PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University and was awarded a Doctor of Divinity by Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon for his work in the field of pluralism.



Yusuf-al-qaradawi

News

Look out, world: here comes booming India



Street scene in Delhi, India

Dick Morris

China has replaced the Soviet Union in our lexicon of villains, and the age-old American preoccupation with the growth of this Asian giant has metastasized into full-fledged paranoia. But the truth is much more sanguine.

India, not China, is the coming giant of the 21st century. And India, unlike China, has no history of imperialism or inclination to global domination.

This year, for the first time, India passed China in economic

growth. Its gross domestic product (GDP) shot up by more than eight percent and now amounts to more than \$3,000 per capita, on a purchasing-power-parity basis. China's GDP, about \$5,000 per capita, is still larger, but not for long.

The key to China's coming failure and India's growing success is Beijing's dependence on manufacturing exports for its wealth and New Delhi's focus on its service sector. China exports more than \$500 billion of

products to the rest of the world, including more than \$125 billion to the United States (the US sells China only \$25 billion each year – this is not a typo). Because of its low-wage economy and massive manpower, China can undercut the rest of the world in labor costs and produce goods for less than anybody else can.

But this race to the bottom of the global economy will be won not by the lowest-wage economy but by robots. In the coming decade, the growth of robotics will end most manufacturing employment. Manufacturing will go the way of farming – a few percentage points of the global work force will produce all our products, just as it now grows the bulk of our food.

China's impoverished workers will lose out to American and Japanese robots, and the source of its economic growth will likely wither in the coming decades.

India assured its future power by switching away from the socialist economic model in the early '90s and has moved closer to a free-market system each year since. With the fall of the state-oriented Congress Party, the government has pushed free-market economics ever more forcefully.

India's economy is firmly rooted in the service sector. Almost half of its GDP comes from services, spurred by almost \$4 billion of investment by American companies. Because of its English fluency, India is in a position to tap into the growth of the U.S. and U.K. economies and to provide low-cost, high-quality services, particularly to the high-tech market. Try calling any computer help line and listen to the accent on the other end of the phone.

English will trump Chinese as the language of the global economy, and services will exceed manufacturing in the information age. India, not China, is equipped to exploit both of these developments to fuel its rapid progress. India's middle class, now numbering more than 300 million people, will develop purchasing power to sustain rapid growth from its internal market in the near future.

And India is not imperialistic.

It has never focused on aggrandizement or gaining regional power. With the visit of India's prime minister to the White House, we should focus on its increasing ascendancy and celebrate the fact that we will, indeed, have to deal with an Asian giant, but it won't be China. The huge state sector that weighs down the Chinese economy, the lack of English fluency and the communist aversion to permitting free access to the flow of global information all militate against its following the Indian model.

India will likely make a great global partner for the United States. In a recent Pew research survey, Indians expressed warm feelings for the United States and gave the Us a positive rating relatively unique in the world. A recent book, *The Anglosphere Challenge* by James C. Bennett, stresses the pivotal nature of English fluency in the information-age economy to come. The growing role of India is testament to that observation.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years.

Indian church group opens feeding centre in flood-ravaged Mumbai

Anto Akkara

New Delhi (ENI)—Churches and church-backed groups in India have launched a massive feeding programme in Mumbai – India's financial capital – following the worst floods in a century.

The Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), a member of Geneva-based Action by Churches Together (ACT), has opened feeding centres in several of the poorest areas of Mumbai following the torrential rains in the city formerly known as Bombay.

"We are feeding 5000 families as of yesterday," said Sushant Agarwal, director of CASA which is the humanitarian aid wing of the National Council of Churches in India grouping of 29 Orthodox and Protestant Churches.

Agarwal told Ecumenical News International that as part of its initial response, CASA is also providing emergency relief to poor families in the form of clothes,

cooking utensils and school kits for children. Many of the slums along the river banks and sewer canals have been washed away.

In the last week of July nearly 200 centimetres of rain has lashed the city. Of this, nearly 100 centimetres fell on July 26, grinding the bustling city on the west coast of India to a halt.

While roads were submerged under several feet of water, railway tracks remained inundated and even the runways at Mumbai airport were flooded in the monsoon downpours forcing an unprecedented closure.

The incessant rains have led to landslides, collapse of houses, and drownings resulting in more than 400 deaths in Mumbai alone.

"It has been horrible," said Geevarghese mar Coorilos, metropolitan of the Bombay diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and a former NCCI

president, speaking from his diocesan office in New Mumbai. While at least a dozen churches have been flooded, he said it was impossible to contact many of the 30 parish priests of his diocese.

Roman Catholic Bishop Percival Fernandes of Mumbai, told ENI he had to abandon his car along with three other priests and wade through water knee deep for three kilometres to a nearby seminary last week during the deluge.

"We have opened several shelters for those rendered homeless by the rain in our schools and other institutions," added Bishop Fernandes, secretary general of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India.

The Catholic St John's High School in the Marol suburb of Mumbai was smitten by tragedy when the school compound wall collapsed, killing five people including a child.

Mumbai, India



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Editorial

God saw all that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

Harry der Nederlanden

When the writer of Genesis describes God in the act of creation, again and again he says, "And God saw that it was good."

That's a strange thing, isn't it, for the Creator to do?

God is the Source, the Author and Maker of all good. When he makes something, of course it's good. Can there be any doubt?

No, God doesn't need someone to tell him that what he has made is good – least of all us. And surely there could be no doubt in his own mind that what he was making was good.

Yet, in Genesis we see him taking a step back from his handiwork to say, "Look at that, will you: isn't it great! Isn't it beautiful? It really, really is a good thing that I've done."

God took that little step back to gaze in admiration on what he made at every step in the process. After each thing he makes, we hear him sigh, "Amen! That's good. I like it."

And after he was done creating, on the Seventh Day he again took time to say Yes and Amen to everything he had made.

The Seventh Day is like a great big house-warming party. God celebrates the whole kit and caboodle, the whole show – the entire unfolding cosmos from monster galaxies to mustard seeds, from seven seas to sand fleas.

That really is a very remarkable thing for God to do. First he decides to make this universe and its myriad of creatures, then he goes ahead with the project and makes it all according to his specifications, and then he feels the need to step back from his handiwork to say Yes to it. To me it seems a superfluous act – completely unnecessary, something extra, icing on the cake.

But joy, delight, love – these always have that quality. They seem to be something extra, a supplement added to what's already there. The world often appears to be little more than a mighty assemblage of things and events – brute, intractable facts. But then something fills us with delight or we fall in love, and suddenly the world is illuminated and hangs together, it all makes sense.

The sun comes out from behind the clouds and all the colors and textures leap out of the landscape. It becomes

luminous, radiant with meaning. It is infused with the glory of God.

Paradoxically, this supplemental, this secondary moment seems to penetrate to the very essence of things. It is not just about the mere being or existence of things; it is about saying Yes to them. It is about delighting in them and celebrating them as a gift. It is about participating in God's love for them, for us. It is about entering into a supernatural mutual admiration society.

In taking a step back to affirm the goodness of his wonderful works, God (and the writer of Genesis) of course had his eye on us – the creatures to whom he gave his eyes, and with whom he shared his breath. He invites us to peek over his shoulder. Okay, we weren't present at creation. In fact, we mortals are often warned not to think of ourselves as co-creators. Yet, God is not put off by such boundaries. He invites us to join him in the act of affirming and celebrating creation while he is still in the kitchen measuring and mixing.

All through Western history thinkers have reflected on this doubleness – being and consciousness, reality and reflection on reality, the things themselves and our representation of those things. Materialists give priority to the one and idealists priority to the other. But the two moments are part of the way we are made: we are made to stand in the midst of those material things, ourselves creatures of clay, and to join God in reflecting on his handiworks to affirm them and to reflect our appreciation, delight and gratitude back to God. It's a party. It's a love-in. It's all about joining into a communion and community.

Our oldest daughter, Clarissa, got married during the summer break between this issue and the last one. The wedding ceremony was a small one, family only (well, Clarissa's best friend snuck in), held in our back yard. Rose spent countless hours planting and watering hundreds of flowers so everything would look festive for the wedding day, and the flowers cooperated. We even put up a stylish arbor in the midst of the garden to serve as a background as the couple exchanged vows.

One day I noticed that our old van was riding very low in the back, even lower than when we deliver the papers to the post office. It turned out that Rose had visited Kim's rockpile and filled quite a number of mailing containers with flat rocks. (Kim lives on a farm, but she comes in to help with the mailing.) Rose had a specific vision of how she wanted that garden and that arbor to look for the wedding – and it involved rocks – rocks and flowers and tall plants and grasses.

It made a perfect setting on a perfect day in July. The father of the bride had been compelled to get a haircut, so he, too, looked perfect. There were relatives from the east and the west, from the north and the south (and the friend who crashed the wedding). There was a big table (borrowed from the CC office) loaded with delicious food. And the next day, at their apartment in Toronto, there were lots and lots more friends.

That's the way of weddings: there's lots of preparation, lots of tradition, lots of ceremony, lots of celebration.

But at the heart of it is this moment of affirmation, in which we join God in saying Yes to all that he has made: Yes, it is good; Yes, life is worthwhile; Yes to the ties, the human bonds, the love and passion that make life worthwhile and meaningful, redolent with

hope and promise – like the flowers in the garden.

The Sabbath/Sunday moment in many ways is the archetypal moment in which we join God to delight in his creation and in what he has done with us in his journey with us. But a wedding feast is the archetypal celebration by which we affirm and enter into the life of God's creation.

We usually think of that creation as constituted by tiny particles and energy, but more fundamental than these miracles of matter and energy is the miracle of divine love. That's the most basic, indispensable energy that makes it all go round, that forms the basis of human family and society and the motor of history. When a couple joins hands and exchanges vows, they invoke that divine energy to uphold and sustain their moments and days together on this earth – in a togetherness with family and friends, yes, and also with rocks and flowers and arbors.

This is what I felt almost tangibly standing in our back yard as Clarissa and Gregg Taylor exchanged their vows. In the middle of the ceremony, there was a slight sprinkling of rain drops, as if to remind us that marriage is not all sunshine and flowers.

But I wanted to point to what surrounded them, all those visible and invisible things – to say that it doesn't begin with what we do or what we feel or how hard we run the race. No government legislation can confer or take away this mystical thing, this spiritual house, this creational garden of marriage. You begin by accepting it as a great and glorious gift, like the sunshine and the rain and the whole creation around you. Look at the lilies in the garden – they don't have to read self-help books; they drink from the soil and turn their faces to the sun. They know how to relax and depend on the goodness of the Creator. It all begins by accepting a gift, a gift bought and paid for, not by your mother and father, but by God himself.



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Comment

What will Ottawa do next?

What will Prime Minister Paul Martin and the Opposition party leaders do now to implement Canada's promise to boost African aid made at the G-8 Summit?

Despite the terrorist tragedy in London, the leaders of the Group of Eight major industrial nations (Canada, The United States, France, Germany, Italy, Britain, Russian and Japan), reached agreement on a \$25 billion (U.S.) promise of aid to Africa.

While Paul Martin joined in the July 8 agreement to double the G-8 countries' total aid to Africa to \$50 billion a year by 2010, he disappointed activists by refusing to go further and commit to a massive increase in Canadian foreign aid, as urged by G-8 Chair, British P.M. Tony Blair, and numerous anti-poverty groups.

Irish rock stars Bono and Sir Bob Geldof, key organizers of the Live 8 concerts, hailed the \$25 billion promise of aid to Africa as, "an historic triumph" for the growing anti-poverty movement. "I think he (Martin) made a mistake" by not announcing increased aid, Bono added. "Canada lost it's chance to lead."

Bono, like millions of others, had demanded the G-8 countries, including Canada, to commit 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Product (GNP) to foreign aid by 2015. Martin reportedly shrugged off

the criticism from Bono, saying Bono's role is to push Canada to spend more on foreign aid. In contrast, the Prime Minister's role is to spend responsibly, Martin said.

According to an earlier Decima Research poll, 76 percent of respondents prefer the federal government to set a pace for foreign aid that it feels is affordable for the country, compared to 16 percent who want the country to commit to the target (of 0.7 percent) and time table (2015). Martin maintains it's irresponsible to commit to spending targets that he's not sure Canada can meet.

Martin's refusal to commit to the 0.7 percent target has angered anti-poverty action groups. They rightly point out that it's precisely because Canada is in such solid fiscal shape (certainly compared to the world's poor nations) that it can afford to devote much more to alleviate the desperate plight of millions of starving and disease-ridden people. Ottawa can do so in active co-operation with Canada's reputable non-government organizations, such as World Vision and Doctors Without Borders.

The Liberal Government, together with the Opposition parties, must conscientiously follow up on the unanimous report of Parliament's Standing Committee on

Foreign Affairs and International Trade. It and Parliament call on the government:

- (1) "To act on the near-unanimous recommendations of Committee witnesses from 2003 to date to honor the Millennium Development Goals and to commit immediately through a plan, to increase Canada's aid budget by 12-15 percent annually to achieve an aid level of 0.5 percent of Canada's Gross National Product by 2010 and 0.7 percent of Canada's GNP by 2015,"
- (2) "To improve our aid effectiveness by strengthening the partnership with civil society, both in Canada and overseas;"
- (3) "To introduce legislation prior to the next federal budget, which establishes poverty reduction as the priority for Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) as outlined in the historic February 17, 2005, letter from the Opposition leaders to the Prime Minister, to ensure that aid is provided in a manner consistent with Canada's human rights obligations and respectful of the perspectives of those living in poverty; and
- (4) "To ensure the increased funding is reflected in the 2006-2007 federal budget."

Just before the G-8 summit the PM stated: "I don't believe in making commitments in

the air." Well, I strongly believe Martin and all Mps should begin implementing what Parliament and its Standing Committee resolved.

Non-partisan, co-operative action by all concerned would be a powerful demonstration of responsible politics. It would affirm Canada's actual commitment to the international public good involving the health and well-being of millions of desperate people.

Wouldn't it be great if the upcoming (pre-) election campaign included positive political debates focusing on core values and effective actions shaping a meaningful future for the poor and powerless the world over?

Maybe Parliament should levy a special tax on luxury cars and gas-guzzlers and designate it to help finance Canada's foreign aid and Kyoto Protocol obligations.

Clearly, we can and must do more to help end the terrible scourges of disease and poverty. They are basic justice-issues requiring real integrity, credibility, generosity and solidarity.

Gerald Vandezande
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NOTE: Excerpts of this article appeared in the Toronto Star of July 15.

Harry Potter and the magic of story

Phil Reinders

How do you explain all the hubbub over Harry? Security guards keeping watch over caches of books, Supreme Court injunctions against leaked secrets, Potter parties marking the midnight release of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, kids staying up way past their bedtime lined up to get their hands on a soon-to-be sold out copy, and sane adults aiding and abetting all of this. What sort of spell has been cast to cause such Muggle madness?

The latest J.K. Rowling book chronicling the exploits of the pre-teen wizard-in-training has touched off another hopped-up-on-Harry cultural frenzy. Sure much of it is marketing savvy and media-hype, but I wonder if there's something more to all this Potter-mania? Hasn't Harry tapped into something missing in our culture, something spiritual?

I don't mean all the magic or sorcery of the book, which mostly is pretty mechanical stuff. Mainly, I'm thinking about the magic of story. Basically, the Harry Potter series is a cracking good kids story. And story itself has a power that we've easily dismissed in our factoid world. We live in a reduced world, where only what is material or measurable is considered true or real. And so we end up living with a shriveled and shrunken sense of reality.

But a good imaginative story widens our sense of reality. Invoke the words "Once upon a time ..." or "In the beginning ..." and a spell is cast, a world is created, and

our sense of reality expands. A good story often helps to reveal what we sense is real and true but do not yet see.

Mostly, stories help us deal with life. They're a little like toys, which encourage children to explore the world without its dangers. My son plays with his fire-truck and doesn't get burned or suffer smoke inhalation. In a similar way, stories help us enter and explore another world, experiencing its pain and joy, and so equip us to deal with the reality in which we find ourselves.

The Harry Potter series constructs a clear conflict of good versus evil where right overcomes wrong. And in our 9/11, and now 7/7, reality of war on terror and suicide bombers, who can't understand the appeal of this Hogwarts fantasy world where Harry fights the powers of darkness, where right overcomes wrong?

But the magic of J.K. Rowling's series points beyond the story to something more. Harry Potter and the world of flying broomsticks, forbidden forests, Marauder's maps and Dr. Ubbly's Oblivious Unction taps into a deep human longing for something beyond this visible world – and kids know this well. The Potter series is fantasy literature, operating in a world of magic and intrigue, a universe filled with wonder, mystery and the supernatural. And it's the little children lining up at bookstores and leading us to admit, no matter how hard we try to suppress it, this world we inhabit is not enough.

There is a deep human longing – some call it a God-shaped hole in every human

heart – for more than what this life offers. The band Switchfoot sings about it: "We want more than this world's got to offer, we want more than the wars of our fathers, and everything inside screams for second life, yeah! We were meant to live for so much more. Have we lost ourselves?"

The Harry Potter series touches at the secret within each of us, that somehow we've lost ourselves and yet know there's more, a bigger world and larger story we were meant to be a part of.

If you've ever been sad when you read the news, if you've ever been moved when you see the picture of a starving child, if your

blood has ever boiled at a story of injustice, then you know this world is not enough. You know what it is to long for more than this world's got to offer. Those desires, like the child's fantasy world of Harry Potter, are signs pointing out that we were made for something more.

We've lost our reverence for story. Mostly we dismiss it as child's play or mere myth. But perhaps it is the key to entering the story we were meant to live and meeting the Storyteller of our lives?

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60th Anniversary

Bombers, button pushers, labor justice, roads and dams

Harry der Nederlanden

The CC of August 12, 1960 carried a front page story by Louis Tamminga that puts our present worries about radical Islamist bombers in perspective. It recalls the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, 60 years ago this month. A single atom bomb destroyed an entire city of over 150,000 people. Over half of them were killed immediately, many vaporized by the heat. They were more fortunate than those who died afterward from radiation poisoning.

Most of the story, however, is not about what atomic weapons did to Japan, but about the shadow of fear that it cast over the nations. Any atomic war, scientists warned, could end up destroying or poisoning all life on earth.

"Never before in history were scientists so upset about the outcome of their invention," wrote Tamminga. "Over night the Federation of American Atomic Scientists was organized to find ways to rid the world of the menace of nuclear weapons."

Less than ten years later, however, the U.S. tested a bomb that was much more powerful. While the bomb dropped on Hiroshima seared an area of less than 5 square miles, the (small) hydrogen bomb tested in 1954 devastated about 150 square miles, according to the article.

Scientists described numerous scenarios by which the USSR and the US could end up obliterating one another and rendering the entire globe uninhabitable.

"Military history from 1945 on has unmistakably taught that there is no counter-weapon against atomic missiles. The only military defence against atomic attack is counter-attack, which would spell global suicide."

A few months after ordering the use of the atomic bomb, US President Truman declared: "The hope of civilization lies in an international arrangement looking if possible to

the renunciation of the use and development of the atomic bomb." He added, however: "The difficulties in working out such an arrangement are great."

In one year 13 different organizations were created to promote nuclear disarmament. The UN created the Atomic Energy Commission to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but since then the so-called nuclear club has not stopped growing. Today North Korea has probably acquired nuclear capability and Iran by all appearances is doing everything it can to acquire this terrifying power to destroy.

Concluded Tamminga: "Never before has the Church of Christ been presented with a greater challenge to preach a message relevant to the world situation. Seldom have Christians had an opportunity to bring such urgent intercessory prayers before their Father in heaven."

In the same issue a page 6 story quotes Nikita Krushchev: "I have only to push a button and you will all be blown into the sky." He was talking to visitors from England. Krushchev seems to have been quite a conversationalist. The writer doesn't tell us what the English delegates replied. Perhaps it was, "Please pass the sugar."

"What kind of person is this man who has so much power at his fingertip?" asks the CC article.

It describes him as "remarkably ugly, with blue-black eyes, three prominent wens on his cheeks and two gold teeth in his loose-lipped mouth."

Not very flattering. I believe I'd have been more gracious in describing a man with such power in his finger. You wouldn't want to make him angry.

A teacher from the Ukraine described him as a man without principles or ideals: "He has murdered tens of thousands,

including some of his closest friends." Well, then making friends with him wasn't a good idea either.

In a speech he gave to a group of writers in 1958, he said: "If the Hungarian government had shot a few writers [before the Hungarian revolution of 1956], they wouldn't have had nearly as much trouble. And let me assure you, in the situation I wouldn't have hesitated to do so."

Some said he was very charming. He also seemed to have had a great sense of humor.

In a May, 1958 issue, Gordon Spykman introduced an open letter sent by the CRC classes of Ontario to the government of Ontario on the topic of labor relations. It was deemed improper for the church to intervene on behalf of the Christian Labor Association, but the classes did consider it part of the church's calling to witness about justice in labor.

After expressing gratitude for the liberties provided by Canada, the letter pointed out legislation in Ontario had led to the curtailment of the free exercise of conscience by Christian laborers. It condemns the "closed shop" system as offensive: "Those who stand committed to the ... Principles of the historic Christian faith are being coerced by overwhelming pressures exerted by powerful labor organizations to either yield their fundamental Christian convictions, or to maintain them at the cost of exposing themselves to the danger of being unable to obtain suitable employment."

The appeal was presented to the Select Committee on Labor Relations on January 21, 1958.

"Will this appeal bear any fruits?" asked Spykman. He pointed out that the churches had been asked to pray for God's blessing on this effort.

Today, some 47 years later, the CLAC is able to represent

Continued on next page

THE BEAUTIFUL SYMMETRY OF STACKED WOOD

Robert Klose

[For those sapped by the hot August weather – something to look forward to....]

Sometimes I think there is no symmetry as beautiful as a well-stacked woodpile. It seems that every household has its own ideal. Not far from my home, there lives a woman who has a stand of straight-as-a-rail firs growing on her property. Serendipity has spaced two of these trees at precisely the distance necessary for stacking a cord of wood.

Season upon season, I have watched her. First the wood – split and dry – is trucked in and dumped in a mass. Then she emerges from her home and approaches the delivery with the grace of a hostess welcoming guests. And then she begins to stack, laying the wood down in tiers, until she has tucked the pieces between the firs with the loving care of a mother bedding her children. By the end of July she is done and ready for another winter.



Other folks are cross-stackers: They put down a layer of split wood and then set the next layer at right angles, and the third at right angles to the second. Back and forth it goes, this tried-and-true means of keeping a woodpile from collapsing.

By far the most intriguing and creative stack was one I saw in a remote corner of Maine. The artist had dedicated an ornate gazebo to the exclusive purpose of sheltering his wood.

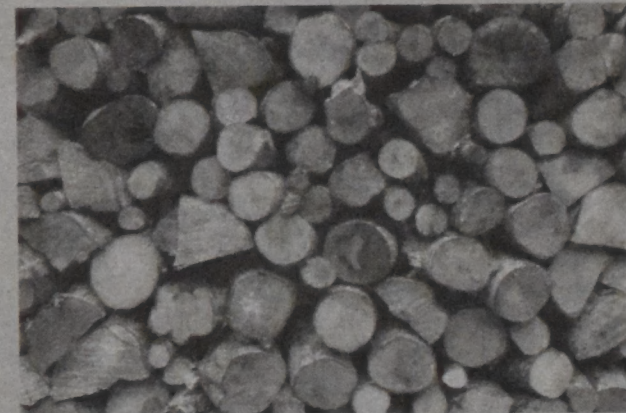
When I saw this construction, winter was already under way and part of the pile had been consumed, affording me a cross-sectional view. I was able to see how the lengths had been arranged in a spiral, some six layers across, filling the gazebo. I could only speculate on the satisfaction the architect of this masterpiece must have felt when he observed, then partook, of his handiwork. (Only a true artist has the fortitude to destroy what he's created, then start over.)

As for my own woodpile, I'm a minimalist. I lay down a base of hardwood pallets (freebies from a local mill), then stack my wood to and fro, in a long line, braced at one end by the garden shed. No cross-stacking, no trees to hold them in embrace, no spiraling. Week after week, the pile grows in height and length. Because of this lazy approach, the pile periodically tumbles. But no matter, this requires only another pallet, which makes room for yet more wood.

I have always been intrigued by the occasional woodpile that seems to have been abandoned. These piles are recognizable by their serenity, their grayness, and the decay at their bases as they compost themselves back into the earth.

Robert Frost wrote a lovely tribute to an abandoned woodpile, and I never cease to recall his words whenever I see one of these forgotten works:

The wood was gray and the bark warping off it
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.



It's true: If the owner of a woodpile does not tend it, nature will. I have seen forgotten woodpiles overgrown with ground ivy and nightshade, their borders softened by goldenrod and purple-headed thistle. These piles are movable feasts, displays of progressive loveliness as each season adds its highlights: flowers in spring and summer, a crown of fallen leaves in autumn, and soft pelts of snow in winter. Of course, whether a woodpile is actively tapped for the wood stove or left to fend for itself, it warms, as Frost pointed out in the conclusion of his poem:

I thought that only
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks
Could so forget his handiwork on which
He spent himself, the labor of his ax,
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

Anniversary/Education

From assimilation to school choice: 100 years of education in Alberta



These two families were featured in CC in the late 50s. A Dutch-Canadian ideal at the time? The Collins family from Peterborough, Ontario strikes a perfect balance, according to the CC editor – 8 sons and 8 daughters. But the balance is about to be disturbed: number 17 is on the way.

The Cooks of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia didn't strive for balance but for manpower. A dairy farmer himself, Mr. Cook kept his sons busy by buying up the milk from over 20 other farmers in the neighborhood and putting his sons to work delivering it door to door. He employed 8 or his 9 sons as well as one grandson.

workers in Ontario, and it has become a powerful witness in the area of labor relations.

During the summer of 1960 in her "Alberta on the line" column, Tini van Ameyde told CC readers that the population of Edmonton had doubled in ten years to some 328,000 inhabitants. More than one hundred vehicles joined in a motorcade that traveled via Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House to Jasper. Its purpose was to urge the government to finish the promised David Thompson highway through the valley of the Rocky Mountains – a "tourist paradise" said Tini.

A large power dam was being built on the Brazeau River for \$45 million. It was expected to create a lake covering an area of 37 square miles. The new airport at Nisku was under construction at a projected cost of \$17 million. And Calgary and Edmonton were about to get their second television station.

Ah, yes – those were the days when technology could still be celebrated as part of progress! In fact, farmers in Southern Alberta were talking about banding together to control the weather. Too many crops were being destroyed by summer hailstorms. Some meteorologists suggested that seeding storm clouds with silver iodide to prevent the formation of hailstones. Even the city council of Calgary was willing to kick in a few bucks. (Probably rode in too many Calgary Stampede Parades. All that jogging is hard on the brain.)

In the summer of 1960, of the 5 churches in Edmonton 3 were vacant, while Rocky Mountain House and Medicine Hat were awaiting the arrival of the Revs. Binnema and Geleynse from the Netherlands.

Gerda Kits and John Hiemstra

Alberta turns 100 this September 1 and children across the province will be heading off to school. Or, rather, schools: Arabic schools, Chinese schools, Christian schools, sports schools, girls-only schools, Francophone schools, Jewish schools, Aboriginal schools, Hutterite schools, and Catholic schools, just to name a few. All are recognized and at least partly funded by the provincial government.

Alberta hasn't always allowed such diverse school choice.

When Alberta became a province in 1905, the school system established in the *Alberta Act* was designed to assimilate children into a common culture. Public schools, all alike, taught the 3 Rs and extras like history, geography, and drawing. The day began with "God Save the Queen" and sometimes the Lord's Prayer. Children learned about cleanliness, obedience and honesty in a non-denominational ethics class. Everyone was taught in English, and schools rarely offered the hour of second-language lessons allowed by the government. Ukrainian Orthodox, German Lutheran, Jewish, Chinese, Dutch Calvinist, and British children went to the public schools together and learned to be good Canadian, English-speaking, Protestant Christian citizens.

Catholics were grudgingly allowed to have their own schools taught by nuns and priests, but they had to learn the same subjects and use the same textbooks as everyone else. Catholic children stayed an extra half hour after school to learn the catechism. Even though many Catholics were French-speaking, they too were limited to an hour of French lessons each day. Government inspectors enforced these strict rules.

If parents disagreed with public schooling, they were forced to isolate their children in private schools. Here Jewish children could learn Hebrew and German children could learn Lutheranism. However, these schools didn't receive any public funds and some were closed by the government.

In 100 years Alberta has come a long way towards a school system that does justice to all and discriminates against none. Independent (private) schools struggled to gain government funding. New language, religion and cultural programs made space in the schools for diversity. Francophone parents went to court and won the right to govern their own schools. Catholic schools worked to keep their distinctive character.

The first challenge to the assimilatory intent of the public schools was the decision to allow Hutterite colony schools. The Hutterites are a pacifist religious group and practice communal living. Upon their arrival in Alberta in 1918, a government deal with the Hutterites led to public schools being opened on their colonies. These schools were unofficially reserved for Hutterite children, failing in the assumed public school task of mixing children of different cultures. As well, although non-Hutterite teachers taught the regular public school curriculum in these schools, the Hutterites added religion and language classes.

In 1967, the introduction of public funding for independent schools was a major blow to the policy of assimilation. Dutch Calvinists, in particular, had been pushing for public funding for their schools since the early 1950s. Along with other groups, they eventually succeeded in gaining government grants to cover part of their costs. Independent schools had to use the provincial curriculum, but adapted it to suit their distinctive identities. This policy recognized that private, non-assimilatory schools could still serve the public purpose.

School choice blossomed in the late 1970s and 80s. Alternative programs – options within the public school system which emphasize a particular language, culture, religion or subject matter – were first adopted in the Calgary public system in 1975. A new set of school trustees, however, chose to squash religious alternative programs and ended contracts with two Jewish and two Logos Christian schools in 1983. By then Edmonton Public had several non-religious alternative schools, including a Jewish school (officially a "language school"), a fine arts program, a Waldorf school, and a school for Cree children. Calgary kept its Plains Indian Cultural Survival School. In 1988 the School Act was amended to specifically allow religious alternative programs. Drayton Valley Christian School became a public alternative school in 1993, and several other jurisdictions followed suit to allow religious alternative programs.

Diversity in language also gained increasing accommodation beginning in the 1970s. Government restrictions on instruction in languages other than English were eased. French immersion programs, and later Ukrainian, Hebrew, German, Arabic, Man-darin, and Polish immersion programs, became popular. The first francophone schools opened in 1983 under the Catholic school system, and in 1990 the Supreme Court ruled that parents had the right to govern their own francophone school system. In 1994, fully-funded francophone school authorities were set up.

Diversity was recognized in other ways too. Homeschooling gained more freedom than ever in the 1988 School Act. Legislation passed in 1994 allowed for fully-funded charter schools (schools with a particular approach to education). Although this legislation discriminates against overtly religious schools, charter schools include the Almadina ESL school, science and arts schools, and the Mother Earth aboriginal school. Catholic schools have retained their status as a separate, fully funded school system in Alberta. The federal government also funds on-reserve First Nations schools.

Many of Alberta's school systems now make room for a variety of religion, culture, and language programs. A recent study revealed that 27 percent of Alberta's students chose some form of faith-based schooling in 2001-2002. This included students in Catholic, Hutterite, public alternative, Francophone, and independent schools. Students can also choose from charter and alternative schools emphasising particular cultures. They can enrol in francophone schools and in bilingual and language immersion programs. And they can attend a variety of religious and other independent schools which are partially funded by the government.

However, no system is perfect. Alternative schools are still at the mercy of the majority-controlled public boards and provincial department of education. Religious schools like Edmonton Christian and the Jewish Talmud Torah still pay for the "religious components" of their programs. Some boards, including Calgary, do not allow religious alternative programs at all. Independent schools do not receive full funding. Hutterite schools must teach their religion and language classes outside regular school hours. While Alberta has come a long way, more equitable treatment of diversity still requires more work. It's a good project for the next 100 years.

Gerda Kits is a graduate of The King's University College in Edmonton and plans to pursue graduate studies in economics. John Hiemstra is professor of political science at The King's University College.

Church

Christian leaders in Northern Nigerian implore president to end sharia

Obed Minchakpu

KADUNA, Nigeria (Compass) — Church and government leaders in northern Nigeria are becoming increasingly impatient with President Olusegun Obasanjo's failure to prevent northern states from using Islamic law (sharia) to demolish church buildings and deny land to Christians.

Nigeria's northern Christian leaders this week appealed to Obasanjo to put an end to the imposition of sharia in 12 northern states. The Nigerian constitution allows Islamic law to be applied only to domestic matters such as marriage and inheritances, not to criminal matters as practised by Islamic governments in the north.

Saidu Dogo, secretary general of the northern chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), told Compass in an interview here on July 28 that the organization sent a demand for an end to sharia to President Obasanjo.

The Christian leaders wrote to him that continued practice of the Islamic legal system in 12 northern Nigerian states has led to the demolition of church buildings, rejection of applications to build new churches, and denial of land to Christians.

"Since the introduction of sharia in most of the states in northern Nigeria, no church has been given a certificate of occupancy for

the building of new churches," Dogo told Compass. Christians build houses and later convert them to churches when state governments deny them land to build new churches, he said; the state governments then mark the churches as illegal structures and destroy them.

Churches that have applied for land are also denied certificates of occupancy, making it illegal for church buildings to be built, Dogo said.

"Yet, we see mosques being built on every corner of the streets — you don't even need government approval in these states to build mosques," he said. "Nobody is saying anything about this. We feel that we as Christians are unjustly being discriminated against, and that is why we are demanding the expunging of this Islamic law which encourages this discrimination against Christians."

The appeal to the president came after he gave an address on July 26 to the country's National Assembly regarding a major, just-concluded forum — the National Political Reform Conference — without acknowledging delegates' concerns about persecution of Christians in northern Nigeria.

Starting in 2000, sharia has been implemented in the northern states of Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, Borno,

Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, Niger, and Kaduna.

Duelling governors

In Jos, capital of central Nigeria's Plateau state, Gov. Joshua Dariye spoke out against Islamic abuses resulting from sharia law when he received the governor of northern Zamfara state on June 24.

In the presence of Zamfara Gov. Ahmed Sani, Gov. Dariye said he fears that religious crises that have become commonplace in the northern part of the country may result in the destruction of Nigerian unity.

"Religion is being manipulated with the aim of destroying Nigeria," Gov. Dariye said, warning that, "unless something is done very urgently by the Nigerian government, religion will become a tool that will not only bring setback to the country, but will eventually lead to her destruction."

Responding to Gov. Dariye's speech, Gov. Sani said he introduced Islamic law because Muslims in Zamfara state wanted it.

"All political leaders are responsible to Nigerians, no matter their religions," said Gov. Sani, who was the first of 12 Muslim governors to introduce sharia. "There is no difference between

Muslims and Christians as they all believe in the judgment of God, and equality in the next world."

Militant violence in northern states

Since September 2001, when Muslim militants precipitated riots that led to the deaths of some 10,000 people in Jos, the capital of Plateau State, Christian villages in the state have also become targets.

In February of last year Muslim militants in Yelwa town attacked Christians, killing more than 300 believers and destroying their homes and churches. The Rev. Samson Bukar and 68 other members of his Church of Christ were killed inside their worship building.

The Rev. S.L.S. Salifu, secretary general of CAN, wrote in a letter to the Nigerian government that after "over 60 Christians were murdered in a church while worshipping by Muslim fanatics and hoodlums, the federal government did not do anything."

According to CAN's Plateau state chapter, more than 30,000 Christians have been displaced as a result of attacks by Muslim militants.

When Muslim leaders in the

northern state of Kano organized a procession to protest the killings of Muslims in Yelwa, more than 700 kilometers away on May 11, 2004, the protest turned bloody and hundreds of Christians were killed in the city of Kano.

According to CAN's Kano state chapter, more than 3,000 Christians were killed in the Kano violence, and a total of 69,000 persons were displaced in the Yelwa and the Kano conflicts.

In an interview with Compass, Rev. Joseph Hayap, secretary of the Kaduna state chapter of CAN said religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims have claimed 10,000 lives in the state in the past four years.

"We have had a series of religious conflicts in this state between Christians and Muslims, from 1987 to 2004," he said. "The religious crisis of the year 2000 claimed over 3,000 lives."

Religious conflicts have struck almost all of the 19 northern states in the past four years. In major cities like Kaduna, Kano, Jos, Sokoto, Bauchi, and Yola, Muslims and Christians no longer live together: the conflicts have forced them to live in separate areas of the towns.

South African churches head campaign to aid Zimbabwe homeless

Harare (ENI) — A South African Council of Churches (SACC) delegation says it intends to launch an international relief campaign after security forces destroyed tens of thousands of urban dwellings for poor people in Zimbabwe in a government campaign.

An initiative to help Zimbabweans left homeless by the two-month long "clean-up" campaign was launched on July 20 in consultation with Zimbabwean churches, the South African Council of Churches said.

Methodist Bishop Ivan Abrahams, who was in the delegation, said on July 21 the campaign would provide immediate relief in the form of blankets, food, water and medicine to all Zimbabweans affected by the government's demolition campaign.

The government deemed the homes illegal, saying it is fighting crime in a campaign castigated internationally by church leaders and many governments.

The campaign, known as Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe's Shona language, means Operation Throw out Trash. It has rendered more than one million people homeless and had led to more than 46,000 arrests. Local people have dubbed it "Zimbabwe's tsunami".

SACC spokesperson Matthew Essau last week noted the situation had reminded Cape Town's Anglican Archbishop Njongokulu Ndungane of Somalia after the Indian Ocean tsunami that battered the country's coastline in December 2005, and which Ndungane saw for himself. "In Somalia it [the crisis] was naturally-caused, and here it's caused by a government," said Essau.

During their visit to Zimbabwe, the SACC said it was preparing to submit a report to South African President Thabo Mbeki who has so far refused to criticize the leadership of his neighboring

country saying quiet diplomacy is the best way of dealing with problems there.

Apart from being used to launch an international relief campaign, Ron Steele, a member of the Rhema Church and part of the SACC group, said the report would be added to a UN report on the demolitions. "We want to elevate the report to an international agenda," he said.

Meanwhile, the Anglican Bishop of Harare, Nobert Kunonga, a long-time supporter of President Robert Mugabe, castigated the South African church delegation for its mission.

"The abortive visit by the South African clergymen under the guise of assessing the impact of Operation Murambatsvina is in fact part of British attempts to destabilize the country by painting a false picture of developments here for the international world," Dr Kunonga told the government-owned Sunday Mail newspaper on July 17.

Two Reformed church groupings look to strengthen ties

Geneva (ENI) — Two groupings of Reformed churches around the world are to explore greater cooperation, including the possible sharing of projects and personnel, the Geneva-based World Alliance of Reformed Churches has announced.

"When the two organizations dare to journey together in God's mission, our member churches will be served better and, in fact, our witness as Reformed churches will be stronger," said WARC general secretary the Rev. Setri Nyomi.

Nyomi was speaking on July 22 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, to the general assembly of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), which had just agreed to move towards a deepening of its links with WARC.

REC has 10 million members in 39 churches in 25 countries. WARC has 75 million members in 218 churches in 107 countries. There are 27 churches that are members of both groupings, WARC noted.

The REC decision calls for a new round of talks in which four members from each organization would enter a more focused conversation with a possible outcome being that REC would maintain its identity as an entity within WARC.

The WARC general secretary welcomed the process. "We do have much in common, not the least of which is the common Reformed family we serve," Nyomi said.

Church

Hunger is spreading in Africa

Food aid is beginning to flow into Niger, where some 2.9 million people face food shortages.

Abraham McLaughlin and
Christian Allen Purefoy

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, AND MARADI, NIGER — Heart-wrenching stories of hunger are starting to flow out of the West African nation of Niger — stories of people like the proud, round-faced mother of an infant named Raba, who walked a day's journey to bring her emaciated son to a feeding center. Already this mother — who was reluctant to give her name because of the shame of it all — has buried five of her 11 children after they succumbed to the hunger that increasingly grips her land.

Yet amid the growing focus on Niger's woes, the broader fact is that the country's 2.9 million hungry people are just a fraction of Africa's 31.1 million food-deprived masses, scattered across Sudan's Darfur region, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Uganda, and elsewhere. Despite progress in boosting democracy, ending wars, and economic growth, Africa is the only region in the world becoming less and less able to feed itself.

Reasons include the relentless spread of desert and drought, high population growth, bad governance, and the world community's flawed hunger-response system.

In all, "Things are moving in the wrong direction," says Marc Cohen of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington. "If we look at sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, all the projections are that poverty and hunger are going to get worse."

In 1970, sub-Saharan Africa had 18 million malnourished children. By 1997 there were 32 million, according to IFPRI. The global trend, meanwhile, moved in the opposite direction: 203 million hungry children in 1970

down to 166 million in 1997, according to a recent IFPRI report.

The focus on Niger appears to be growing, in part because a British Broadcasting Corp. team recently emerged from the remote, landlocked nation with terrible images of starving children that were broadcast around the world.

Aid is now flowing in.

Recently 306 tons of beans and oil were delivered to Tahoua, some 250 miles northwest of Maradi, the eastern town that has become a hub for aid agencies, and 28 tons of high-energy biscuits, 20 tons of enriched milk and a highly nutritional peanut paste were airlifted to Niamey, Niger's capital. The UN now says it will double the number of people it plans to feed, to 2.5 million.

Still, the long-term causes of the hunger remain. Such as the relentless spread of desert and drought. "As the Sahara comes, the farms get smaller," says Abdou Bellas Marafa, chief of Canton Kyibir, a town in southern Niger. "The problem is not just in Niger, but in Mali, Nigeria, and others," explains Chief Marafa, sitting in his dust-covered red robe. The Sahara reportedly spreads at a rate of up to 30 miles a year.

Across Africa, desertification

and drought are causing problems in places like Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Adding to the resource drain is the continent's increasing numbers of people. Population growth doesn't get as much attention as it used to. HIV/AIDS has taken up much of the spotlight and has contributed to a slowing in the overall population-growth rate. But consider that the proportion of malnourished people in sub-Saharan Africa has stayed roughly steady since 1970 — at 33 to 35 percent of the population. Yet the total number of malnourished people has grown with the population, from 88 million in 1970 to an estimated 200 million in 2001, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Food production in Africa just can't keep up with the continent's

growing masses. In Niger, for instance, the 11 million-strong population is expanding at 3.3 percent per year. That's the 10th-highest growth rate in the world, according to the UN, and it means the country's population will double in just 21 years.

Other impediments to feeding Africa's masses include the lack of good roads. Mr. Cohen points out that at the time of independence in 1947, India had a more dense road network than Africa has today. Without good roads and other infrastructure, bumper crops in one region can't be transported to needy areas.

Unlike in previous eras, famines are rarely a surprise. But one stumbling block may be the international community's famine-response system. Currently, when a crisis is identified, donors are asked for pledges to fund the response, then the food is bought or shipped

in. The process can take six months or more.

"The system really needs some rethink," says Cohen. He suggests stockpiling foodstuff in affected regions to enable quick response. And he points to a proposed World Food Program pilot project in Ethiopia that would automatically begin distributing food aid if rainfall is below a certain level.

Meanwhile, back in Niger, Raba's mom is worried next season's crops will be hurt by the current crisis. She planted her millet this season, but then she had to tend to her son, not the crops. "I'm worried about the field," she says. "No one is looking after it." But at least Raba is being fed. He's at a center run by the aid group Doctors Without Borders. He's expected to survive.

• Wire services were used in this report.



The big white bandage round his head doesn't bother little Amissou as he takes small sips of protein enriched milk while his younger sister sings to herself beneath his bed.

A few days ago, this three-year-old victim of Niger's famine could hardly breathe, let alone drink. Amissou, who weighs just 5.8 kg, was severely malnourished and came close to death's door.

Now he is recovering in the intensive care ward of the Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) therapeutic feeding centre for malnourished children in Maradi, a town 600 km east of the capital Niamey.

Evangelical Lutherans in Canada reject blessings for same-sex unions

Ferdy Baglo

Winnipeg, Canada (ENI) — Delegates to the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in Winnipeg have defeated a controversial resolution which would have given congregations a "local option" to introduce blessings for same-sex unions.

"Our community is divided almost 50-50," National Bishop Raymond Schultz told Ecumenical News International after the vote

during the 21-24 July meeting. "That means we have a lot more talking to do with each other."

Only 183 delegates voted for the motion while 220 opposed it. A two-thirds majority was needed to pass it.

Canada became the fourth country alongside Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry. The new law does not oblige churches to perform same-gender

marriages.

"We need a church statement, particularly in view of the fact that now same-sex couples have been defined as [eligible for marriage] under Canadian law," said Schultz. "We have to clarify for ourselves as a church what is the difference between marriage in the church and marriage by the state and what is the basis for relationship."

The time slot for the debate on July 23 had to be extended

to accommodate the dozens of delegates who wanted to speak.

Among supporters of the "local option" measure, several lesbian and gay pastors and laypersons appealed for understanding. Opponents, on the other hand, warned the church would be departing from the Scriptures and the denomination's constitution, and that pressure from society was unduly affecting the church's life.

A delegate in his 20s noted the

vast majority of delegates were older than 50 and predicted that in 10 years time there would be a more sympathetic response.

The vote on same-sex blessings came after almost a year's study by the denomination's national council.

The ELCIC has 180,000 baptised members in five synods serving congregations from Canada's Pacific to the Atlantic.

Opinion

Choosing sides

The shariah court of al-Qaeda Organization in Iraq has decided to hand the apostate, the ambassador of Egypt, which is allied to Jews and Christians to the mujahedeen to...kill him. (Al-Qaeda Organization for Holy War in Iraq, July 6, 2005)

These chilling words were issued four days after the Egyptian ambassador designate to Iraq, Mr. Ihab el-Sharif, was kidnapped in Baghdad.

On July 7, the same day that four explosions rocked the city of London, killing more than 50 commuters on their way to work and wounding 700 more, the Iraqi terrorists posted this statement on the Internet:

We, al-Qaeda in Iraq, announce that the judgment of God against the ambassador of the infidels, the ambassador of Egypt, has been carried out. Oh enemy of God, Ihab al-Sharif, this is your punishment in this life."

And with that, the terrorists had once again struck to drive fear into the hearts of all who are assisting in bringing a measure of normalcy and freedom to the hard-pressed people of Iraq. The message is all too clear. Cooperate with the new Iraq, and killers will lie in wait for you

Where are the protesters now?

One might have hoped that this monstrous deed would have been cause for action by those who are quick to take to the streets in protest against the Americans. But nothing of the kind happened. The protesters were otherwise engaged. They were battling the police and hurling insults at the G8 leaders who came to discuss relief for impoverished Africa.

What is now resonating across the world is the charge that the U.S.

is a violator of human rights and international law by its abusive treatment of prisoners.

This charge has gained a lot of traction by the Abu Ghraib pictures of cruel and humiliating treatment of prisoners, and by the more recent allegations that prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay facilities have also been abused.

Even U.S. politicians and commentators are joining in the outcry against their own government. It is obvious that this antagonism is nourished by very strong ideological undercurrents that make dispassionate discussion difficult.

What further adds to this difficulty is that it occurs in the context of the war declared against the Western democracies by those Muslim leaders who perceive reality as a conflict between the world of Islam and the non-Muslim world.

This idea of two worlds in conflict is very poorly understood in the West. Most of them want to believe those Muslim leaders who assure us that Islam is a religion of peace.

It is nevertheless true that, according to their own testimony, all Muslim terrorists are convinced that they are serving their God who will reward them with a special place in heaven. This belief is a powerful motivation for the suicide terrorists who kill innocent men, women and children in Iraq, Madrid, London and many other places.

It is of course true that not all Muslims share this belief. Indeed, it's safe to assume that most of them reject that position. But here we are concerned with the Muslim believers who are convinced that the Koran and other sacred Muslim scriptures enjoin them to strive for the rule of Islam in the entire world, by peaceful means if pos-

sible, by force if necessary.

Instead of recognizing this militant form of Islam for what it really is, many in the West are in denial and look for other causes that motivate the followers of Osama bin Laden. They look for things that have offended Muslim believers, and many fix the blame on America. That's how they have recently ratcheted up public attention on the treatment of prisoners.

What about those pictures?

And what about the American treatment of its prisoners: is there not a real problem? Yes, there is, but not in the way many protesters would have us believe.

American authorities have clearly stated that abuse of prisoners is a violation of the military code of conduct and not to be tolerated. Complaints are now being investigated and some have resulted in discipline and jail terms.

However, critics insist that these abuses are not exceptions to the rule but are endemic in the American military. This argument has recently heated up with respect to the alleged abuses at the Guantanamo Bay prison facilities. A special point of contention is the method of interrogation used to obtain vital information that will help the fight against terrorism.

The question is to what extent may pressure be used that does not go beyond the bounds of respect for human life – even in time of war. And on this score it will be impossible to achieve agreement especially in the current climate of hostility.

What is remarkable is that the American military take all accusation seriously and have imposed a strict set of guidelines for interrogators.

None of that has abated the hostility of the critics. That's why there must have been much rejoicing when *Time* magazine obtained a classified copy of the record kept by interrogators of a key al-Qaeda fighter now detained at Guantanamo Bay. *Time* proudly announced its scoop:

"Exclusive: To Get the '20th Hijacker' to Talk, The U.S. Used a Wide Range of Tactics. A Secret Log reveals The First Documented View of How Gitmo Really Works" (*Time*, June 20, 2005, pp. 16-23)

This "hijacker" at first lied about his name and background. But it eventually emerged that he had at-

tempted to enter the U.S. under false pretenses in 2001, and had been refused entry by an alert immigration officer. Authorities now believe that he was the intended 20th member of the 9/11 hijackers.

His name turned out to be Mohammed al-Qahtani, who was captured in December 2001 in Afghanistan and then transferred to Guantanamo Bay. Once al-Qahtani's true identity was known, he was recognized to be a prime source of information.

He was therefore subjected to a steady regime of intense interrogation and pressure that according to the Pentagon resulted in valuable information about bin Laden and others in several Arab countries, al-Qaeda finances, and terrorist training camps.

The methods used to get al-Qahtani to cooperate involved some uncomfortable and certainly stressful treatments. The *Time* article provides a detailed account of the interrogations on the basis of information contained in the "secret log" documents. Throughout, medical personnel carefully monitored al-Qahtani and provided him with the needed medication and care.

Time reports that the dispute is between the American military and its detractors who charge that the interrogators are employing methods that amount to an "outrage on personal dignity."

But then as if the four-person team of writers of this article had second thoughts about their publication of this classified document, they concluded: "Then again, in the war on terrorism, the personal dignity of a fanatic trained for mass murder may be an inevitable casualty."

Things you will not read in the mainline press

Lt. Col. Gordon Cuculli recently reported on his fact-finding visit to the Guantanamo Bay facilities as a member of a Department of Defense mission. He wrote that abuse exists of a kind that gets no press attention. His version of the abuse that he witnessed:

It's the relentless, merciless attacks on American servicemen and women by these terrorist thugs. Many of the orange jump-suit clad detainees fight their captors at every opportunity, openly bragging of their desire to kill Americans. One has promised that, if released, he would find MPS in their homes

through the internet, break into their houses at night, and 'cut the throats of them and their families like sheep'.... One detainee was heard to tell another: 'One day I will enjoy sucking American blood, although their blood is bitter, undrinkable....' They attack guards whenever the soldiers enter their cells, trying to reach up under protective facemasks to gouge eyes and tear mouths. They make weapons and try to stab the guards or grab and break limbs as the guards pass them food. (FrontPageMagazine.com, June 27, 2005)

Even among people of goodwill, debates and disagreements will continue about what is or is not allowed in interrogating prisoners who are hardened fighters dedicated to the holy war against infidels.

The U.S. may well be unwise, suggested David Frum, in handling the legal aspects of the war "on pure executive fiat." He is of the opinion that the administration would be better off to work with Congress in preparing a formal legal code to govern its anti-terror operations.

However, it is far-fetched to argue that America has lost its moral compass and is no different from the tyrants it has removed.

There is a world of difference, and it is this: The Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes were engaged in the systematic destruction and enslavement of human life. Their entire system was corrupt, inhumane, and a threat to their neighbors.

In contrast, the America-led military action has as its purpose the liberation of oppressed people, and the morality of that undertaking is not annulled by the wrongs committed by some miscreants.

Those who are unwilling or unable to see that vital difference are trivializing evil, and they dishonor the sacrifice of the men and women in the American-led military.

They are also trivializing the courageous Iraqi men and women who, against tremendous odds, daily risk their lives in helping to build a decent and free society.

This is sad. What is sadder still is that by their actions they lend support to those who engage in a campaign of destruction and murder.

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Guantanamo Bay prison facilities

Television/Stewardship

Imperfect television – lost and desperate

By Ron VandenBurg

Last year at this time, we the television viewers had been told that reality television was the reality of television. If the viewing public were willing to watch reality show contestants eat bugs, race around the world or vote each other off the island, Hollywood's script writers, actors and directors feared that the only work would be the latest incarnations of *CSI* or *Law and Order*. Last year, reality shows made up a large part of the network schedule; this year has no new realities,

What a difference a year makes.



In our cable and satellite television universe, where watchers pick from thousands of shows and choose what and when to watch it, two shows have become cultural touchstones and have saved a network. With nothing to lose in the ratings war, ABC put in its line up two risks—*Desperate Housewives* and *Lost*.

Viewers – more than 23 million are likely to plan to watch *Desperate Housewives* sophomore season's first episode. Since last fall where it premiered at No. 1, audiences have flocked to *Wisteria Lane* for its melodrama, whodunit and dark comedy.

The show runs the breadth of female woes better than a month of Oprah episodes. Each character represents an extreme of the American psyche, including a self-involved gold digger, a wounded-soul adolescent woman, an overly perfect housewife imposing order and an exhausted hapless homemaker of four rowdy boys.

Feel a little Lost?

In its first season, the breakout hit *Lost* has tracked the adventures of four dozen survivors of an airplane crash on a tropical island who-knows-where (turns out the plane's last transmission before splitting apart in midair pegged its location as hundreds of kilometres from where it came down).

As they have struggled to determine where they were and how to get away, these characters have also forged some semblance of a civilized community, however fractious at times. With a large cast of regulars, this show's characters include a doctor with a savior complex, a prison escapee, a rock-star junkie, a mystic outdoorsman, an Iraqi soldier on the run, a fat guy who says "dude" a lot and several others.

With each episode, flashbacks show the characters in our world and their sins and troubles leading up to that doomed Oceanic Flight 815.

See *Imperfect television* p. 16...

What's a steward?

With all this talk and writing about stewardship – what's a steward anyway? Rather than re-inventing the wheel when a good wheel is in place, I'll let an article written by a stewardship colleague of mine, Patricia van Oostveen, define what a steward is for you. Patricia credits *Becoming a Firstfruits Congregation* by Robert Heerspink.*

A "stigweard" is an Old English term for *steward*. *Stig* meaning "house" and *weard* meaning "warden or keeper". Webster's dictionary defines a *steward* as "one employed in a large household or estate to manage domestic concerns including supervision of servants, collection of rents, and keeping of accounts."

The office of steward is not only one of great responsibility but it is also an office that requires great accountability. Stewards have no inherent authority of their own. Their authority is entrusted to them by their master. When we acknowledge God as our Master and that we are created for a vertical relationship with God, we come to see ourselves as God sees us: *stewards*. Stewardship is how we serve God in our role as his stewards. Stewardship is "everything" we do after we accept Christ.

There are 4 myths that surround the topic of stewardship.

Myth #1 – *The congregation's stewardship is primarily a matter of paying the church bills.*

Many of us live with the misconception that stewardship is primarily fund-raising. Yes it is in a small way, but first and foremost, stewardship is a lifestyle rooted in grace that expresses the fruit of gratitude. Stewardship is another word for discipleship.

Myth #2 – *Faith and finances do not mix.*

Faith and finances *do* mix. There are over 2,300 verses in the bible dealing with financial considerations. Nearly half of the parables that Jesus tells relate in some way to money matters. Our Lord spends so much time talking about the subject it's obvious that for him this great divide between faith and finances does not exist. What we do with our dollars is an accurate reflection of our spiritual priorities.

Myth #3 – *Stewardship is best motivated by guilt*

Our stewardship, like all of the Christian life, is born of grace. Unless our stewardship is rooted in grace, it will become forced and pinched, a pale reflection of what God intends it to be. Our goal as church leaders is to raise up "hilarious" (Greek word *hilaros* meaning cheerful) Christians who, through their gift and offerings, are as ungrudging in their giving as our God is in sending us the Son.

Myth #4 – *Encouraging congregational stewardship is the job of (a) the pastor, (b) the elders, (c) the deacons (choose one).*

The work of teaching and encouraging financial stewardship falls to all of us. We all have the responsibility to

better appreciate how faith affects finances.

To dispel the myths of stewardship we have to embrace the truths of stewardship.

Truth #1 – *Stewardship grows from grace.*

Christ's ministry of stewardship once again makes ours possible. It's important that we recognize that fact. Unless we take seriously Christ's stewardship, our calling as stewards becomes separated from the gospel. True stewardship for the New Testament believer grows from grace. It recognizes that "all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God" (1Cor.3:22-23). In Christ we are taken up into his stewardship. Only if we understand the relationship between Christ's stewardship and ours, will we free it from a legalistic stranglehold and lift it into the arena of grace. Stewardship becomes an expression of the wonderful freedom we have in Christ.

Truth #2 – *We are entrusted and charged with the responsibility of managing God's world.*

For God's redeemed people, stewardship begins with an understanding that we are pre-eminently "entrusted with the secret things of God" (1Cor.4:1). The gospel itself is the highest trust given to us as stewards. It renews us and gives us a fresh opportunity to fulfill the cultural mandate of Genesis 1. The church of Jesus Christ is the steward of that reconciliation in the world today.

Unless the church takes seriously its vocation as steward of God's grace, the broader stewardship of God's creation will not be restored. It is redeeming grace that empowers us to live as stewards over all that which God entrusts to us. Christ's redemptive work extends beyond our personal salvation to embrace heaven and earth (Rev.21:1). Our concerns should be just as broad. The day will come when we will be stewards of that new heaven and earth. We prepare for that future role by serving as faithful stewards today.

So are you a "stigweard"?

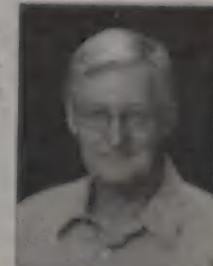
*Content for this article was taken from Heerspink, Robert (1996) *Becoming a Firstfruits Congregation*, Barnabas Foundation, Orland Park, Ill; CRC Publications, Grand Rapids, MI; and RCA Foundation, New York, New York.

Stewardly Tip: Make the 'Master – Steward' relationship real for you. List all that God has entrusted to you – your time; your skills, abilities, aptitudes; your home, farm, business; and your money and possessions. Recognize that God entrusts these to you and that you are accountable to him for its stewardship. Below the list write: I acknowledge these gifts as yours, my Heavenly Father, and I covenant them back to you for service in your Kingdom – then sign and date.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Environmental Stewardship: A Homemaker's Perspective

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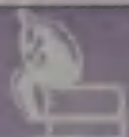
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Sea to Sea

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman



The spirituality of the bike

A few months ago I wrote a piece on "The Theology of Bike." Now that I am deep into a bicycle tour experience with 120 other people, I am reflecting more on the spiritual dimensions of such an adventure. Spirituality is more experiential than theology, which tends to be reflective and doctrinal. Let me muse about a few ways in which God speaks to us as we pedal.

First of all, we are pedaling through God's wonderland, and nothing lifts the heart to praise more than a majestic mountain scape, a mighty wind, or the great big prairie sky. To carve your way through the landscape of God's masterpiece is to experience his presence. It is not always a gentle and welcoming presence. Torrents of rain that sent our tents rolling (as they did in Medicine Hat) remind us of our vulnerable status in this universe. We are a frail creature. Small things, like the wind, become big things on a bicycle. They call us to a form of respect that is almost reverence.

It's not just the elements that command our attention. We have had different cyclists come close to crashing into a bear, a deer, and a prairie dog. An osprey nest was located near one of our campsites, and the attentive among us saw it catch the up-draft, dive into the lake, and bring some dinner home to its young. Beauty comes in a different color each day, calling us to worship the artist.

Spirituality of the body

Spiritual challenges also meet us through

the physical rigor of the tour. One day we pushed over 150 km through a mountain pass, encountering glacial chills and alpine showers, followed by a relentless summer sun (the temperature went from 5 degrees to 28 degrees after 15 minutes of cycling downhill). We are putting layers of clothes on and off all day. Sometime the vastness of a hill can zap your courage, and you wonder how you ever signed up for the self-torture. But when you get to the point where you can't keep going, well, you keep going. We are learning about parts of ourselves — and God's grace — that we didn't tap into before.

Sometimes something happens back home that requires a hiatus from the tour. One cyclist had a daughter die, and he had to leave us for two weeks. Another had his mother die, and yet another a grandfather. It is hard in the midst of all the excitement and adventure to grieve, remember, and give thanks for the life of loved ones, but with 120 cyclists, such losses are bound to happen. We pray with and for each other in our sadness.

Recently we said goodbye to 15 cyclists who were completing their tour of duty. They had signed on for a three week segment, and that ended in Regina. At the same time, we greeted about 10 new riders. This mixture of hellos and farewells requires us to dig into emotional reserves that may have seemed dry. Again, it's like finding gears that you have hitherto never used.

We have had many injuries, and thankfully none have seemed to cause permanent damage. Beyond the scrapes, soreness, and anxiety that most of us have felt in some way or another, we have had two cyclists fall and break an elbow. One has gone home to recover, and hopes to rejoin us when we come through Ontario to finish the tour with us. The other hopes to join us next week. How do you decide, given ambiguous information from a doctor, when the future of your arm is imperilled by the life-changing cycling experience that



Alice Witvoet with husband Bert and son John

beckons you? This is definitely a time for supplication with God and communal spiritual discernment.

The tour is what we make it

We have been tossed together with people from all across the country, people we may never have chosen to cycle with if we were asked. This is a spiritual journey of the heart that sometimes surprises us in the chemistry of our group. Like the Israelites in the desert, there are times of jostling, complaining, and friction. These obstacles can be times of spiritual training for us.

This is a deep spiritual wisdom of such a tour: it becomes what we make of it. The spiritual rewards are to a large degree constructed by ourselves. One cyclist, for example, told me that when he was a child on family vacation he would long to jump in the lakes and rivers that they traveled by, but his father would always say there was no time for such frivolity. "So on this trip," he told me, "I've jumped in every lake and river we've passed — weather permitting. I'm up to 15 different bodies of water so far." This man is using the tour to redeem the past, and turn a corner on his spiritual path.

Others help us

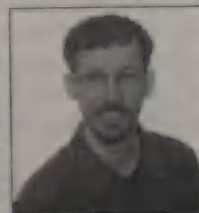
"make" the tour, too. Our hosts along the way have been a beautiful example of God's graciousness. Churches have cooked meals, families have billeted us, and many have cheered us along the road. Pork roasts, curry chicken dinners, and ice cream treats bring a cheer of thanks. These are gigantic boosts for our cycling team, and we are filled with gratitude for the open hearts and open doors, not to mention the home cooking.

Finally, we have special times to reflect on our journey together. Many take time to take photos and write in a personal journal of our adventures and misadventures. We have "Peleton" meeting most days where we share announcements, discuss safety issues, and sing, tell stories, and pray together. We also meet in "Pump Crews" (small groups) to go over the next day's map and meditate on the day's devotion from the *Pumped!* book. These disciplines help us train not only for the next day's ride, but also for the ride of our lives.

The Sea to Sea bike tour is not only about inner experiences, however. We tell people wherever we go what we are doing and why, and every encounter is a story in itself. People are interested, and many are generous with time, money and other resources when they find out about our goals of church development and the "Make Poverty History" campaign. The media seem eager to write about this crazy "largest bike tour in the history of the country", and the excitement seems to be growing as we go east.

God is with us even as he challenges us along the way. He has been protecting us in magnificent ways, if we stop to think about all the "close calls" with large trucks and poor pavement. This summer's pilgrimage is a small analogy of the rest of our lives, and we hope to learn and grow more closely with God's Spirit as we cycle across the country. Goodwill seems to multiply, and that is a gift that we cherish as we pedal.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.



Marja and Peter Slofstra



Leaving Calgary with trailers and car driven by Bob, Bob & Yvonne Dykstra

Birds & bikes

Loons



Christopher De Vinck

For the past fifty years of my life, for two weeks each summer, I sat at the edge of an old, Canadian lake and listened for the eerie song of the loon.

In the late 1950's my parents bought a bit of land three hours west of Ottawa, a place where the general store sold strings of licorice and Cracker Jacks, and where, at night, we could see the Milky Way and, if we were lucky, the Northern Lights. Often, in the morning, looking out the bedroom window, I saw the thick lake mist and heard the distinctive, odd warble of the loon calling out into the Canadian air.

I grew up with the loons, and when my wife and I married and raised our children we also spent two weeks in July with our Cracker Jacks, licorice and loons.

For all these years I have been observing the famous birds, taking notes, keeping track. The male and females look the same, but the female is just a bit smaller. They have a difficult time propelling themselves into the air, but once up, they fly faster than most birds that I have seen.

I've watched a loon sink like a submarine, releasing air from its body and from under its wings and slowly submerge. During their mating dance, loons swim in a circle and dip their beaks at each other. I've read that they mate for life, and that their fossils have been discovered of 65 million years ago.

Yesterday, after work, I was sitting in the living room reading *The New York Times*.

"The war in Iraq is still raging."
"Scandals in Washington are still leaking all over the nation."
"Two children are murdered in a town north of Chicago."

The telephone rang.

"Dad?"

My son was calling on his cell phone.

"Hi, Michael."

"Dad, I need your help."

"Where are you? Are you okay?"

"No, no. I'm fine. I'm here at Belmar, at the seashore with my friends."

Michael is a twenty-year-old sophomore at Rutgers University majoring in anthropology, and he still needs his dad.

"Dad. There's a loon. I think its leg is broken. It's flopping on the sand. It can't fly. I don't know what to do."

I remember so well when Michael was a little boy, and how I unbuckled him from his car seat and carried him in my arms and into the house. So often he'd fall asleep when we returned from his grandmother's house, but then he would suddenly raise his small head from my shoulder and whisper, "I'm not asleep, Daddy."

"Michael, why don't you pick the bird up and bring it to the wildlife center. They will be able to take care of it."

"Dad," Michael laughed with great charm, "this is a loon! It's a huge bird."

Most birds I've saved in my life were robins, blue jays, sparrows. It was a funny thought thinking of Michael trying to wrestle a large, two-foot long red-throated loon.

"Mike. I'll see if I can't find an organization in Belmar that might help you, and I'll call you right back."

I dialed information, asked for the number of the Belmar town hall, and when a serious, professional voice answered, I quickly explained, "My son is a sophomore at Rutgers.

A mom & her motorcycle

A few years ago Jack bought an old motorbike and rebuilt it from the ground up. Before long he couldn't pull out of the yard without me on the back. The minute I heard him fire up the Suzuki, I was ready for a ride. It was a fairly small bike, so the following year he traded it in on a bigger model, with more power and more room for the two of us. It was the first brand new vehicle he had ever owned. He thought he'd died and gone to heaven.

The day he picked it up I followed him home in the truck. I watched how his bike held the road and hugged the curves. When another bike came from the opposite direction, the two riders gave each other the "biker wave," sort of like two knights saluting each other on horseback.

I spent that whole summer and the next happily experiencing life as Jack's passenger. It's hard for a non-biker to understand, but I truly adore the gleam of the chrome and the roar of the engine. There's something about being in the open air, feeling the bike under me, breathing in the various scents of springtime, summer and fall that connects to a place deep inside. Even when he brought home a thirty-year-old Norton to restore, I could appreciate the beauty, sound and power of the machine (although from a passenger's point of view it's a literal pain in the butt).

Then last summer I began to notice the occasional female rider. My mind drifted to the tantalizing prospect of owning my own bike. Jack saw it coming. He says I used to stare at women's motorbikes with the same intensity as Rocky stares at a box of Timbits. We went to a big motorcycle exhibition in Toronto last fall where I "tried on" numerous makes and models and talked to a dozen salespeople. Finally I signed up for a safety course for spring 2005. They assured me they could make me into a safe rider in a single weekend.

April started out unusually warm, but as my course drew near the forecast was gloomy. Undaunted, I took my place with nineteen other students. About half of us had never driven a motorbike before. Six of us were women — one in her twenties, one grandmother, and three others all about my age, two of whom had prominent tattoos, and me.

That weekend could provide material for an entire series of columns. The rain wasn't so bad, really. And once you lost feeling in your extremities you hardly noticed the snow pelting your face. I came home shivering, weary and bruised.

While thawing out I questioned my own sanity. I thought about how comfortable it was to ride with Jack. Then I remembered the thrill of negotiating the figure-eight exercises and short-gate slaloms at the course. I went to sleep still hearing the din of

He's on the beach with friends and he found a loon with a broken leg, and he wants to help it."

The woman changed her official voice to a genuine voice of delight. "Isn't it great that a college student shows such concern about a bird? I'll connect you to the police station, and they will call animal control."

"Belmar police," the woman dispatcher said.

"Hello. My son is on the beach

and he found a loon with a broken leg. He's a student at Rutgers..."

"What a nice thing for your son to do," the woman said in a suddenly unofficial police voice, the voice of a lovely person. "Where is he?"

"Well, he's on the beach in your town."

"But the beach is twenty blocks long. Call him back, and have him call me so that we can know his lo-

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke



twenty motorbikes in my head. I woke up the next day more determined than ever to own a bike. Jack couldn't wait to go shopping.

Before long we found the perfect starter bike — a 250 Marauder. Among other things I had learned, "First you get good. Then you get fast." Nothing high-powered or heavy for my training wheels. As they loaded it onto the trailer I admired its shiny blue paint and stylish chrome exhaust pipe. I hoped for many happy kilometers on it by the end of the season. I also hoped I'd live to tell the tale.

I spent the first week riding around the farmyard for at least an hour a day. Stop, start, left, right, full circle, 180, gear up, gear down, stop, start. Even Rocky gave up trying to keep pace. Fortunately the manure pad was empty, so I could practice the more difficult maneuvers out there. Jack thought I was ready for the road. I agreed.

Off we went, like Yogi and Boo-boo down the side road. For the first time I took it above third gear. My heart pounded, my stomach somersaulted. I counted as I went up through the gears and down again. It was fabulous! Don't let anyone tell you there's no spiritual discipline in motor-biking — I honestly prayed before every corner and gave thanks each time we arrived safely home.

It's been a great summer. So far I've driven nearly 5,000 kilometers. I'm learning to live with helmet head. I run most of my errands on the bike. If only I could fit the weekly groceries into the saddlebags. Reactions vary. A lot of people think it's neat. My mother actually laughed out loud. (The safety lecture didn't come until the following visit.) Some ask, "What is this — some kind of mid-life crisis?" To which I reply, "Not anymore."

And then I rev up all 250 cc's and glide off into the sunset. Now, if I could just decide where to put my tattoo.

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cation and we'll send out someone from animal control."

"Michael. Here's the number for the police. Just tell them where you are and they'll send someone to help the bird."

"Thanks, Dad. I love you."

"I love you too."

I went back and continued reading the newspaper.

See **Loons** p. 14 ...

Ecclesiastes

My neighbor as gracious mystery

AA. Van Ruler

*Two are better than one,
because they have a good return
for their work:
If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!*
Ecclesiastes 4: 9, 10

The fact that we are not alone in the world but have neighbors or fellow men is very remarkable and important. Especially if we remember that we are not just surrounded by a mass of our fellow men in general, as exemplars of a single type, but that we are related to some of them in a special way.

These can be quite different kinds of relationships. People can be married to each other. They can be friends. They can be neighbors, or colleagues, or members of the same church. A person can be a father or mother to several children, or he can be a child to his parents.

It is in these relationships that the role of fellow man first receives a fully human face. We are not a pile of rocks. Nor a patch of flowers. Not even a herd of animals. We are part of the human race.

In this context, the Preacher says two are better than one. He is thinking here of two persons who have some special relationship with each other. He adds: two are better than one because they have a good return for their work. This means, in contemporary terms: the specialized role of fellow man first gives content, form, sense and meaning to being human.

As long as I'm occupied all by myself, I am busy with things, and that busyness can fill my whole existence, but in being alone I am

Loons ... continued from p. 13

"North Koreans still building nuclear bombs."

"Congress investigating abuse of power."

"Health care in a mess."

The phone rang.

"Dad."

"Hi Michael."

"The loon flew away. I can't find it."

Michael and I laughed and laughed together over the phone, both relieved that the bird was okay. Loons are aquatic creatures living most of their lives in the water. On land they flop around, their legs twist backwards. They

again and again seized by the question, "Why do I really bother? Isn't my existence - isn't the whole of being really meaningless?"

Then, suddenly in some special relationship I discover my neighbor - another person who also has a heart, who also experiences the same things, who is a self and who also labors under the burden of existing.

To so discover one's neighbor is a wonderful experience. Usually we live superficially, merely passing by one another. This is mainly due to circumstances. We are much too busy. We are totally absorbed in our work. We have to scramble just to stay even. As a result, we overlook the other.

But these are really only symptoms. The real reason we overlook others is not due to circumstances but is located in ourselves - in our pagan hearts. We simply do not see the unfathomable mystery of our neighbor. We become aware of it only now and then.

And then it overcomes us as a tremendous manifestation of grace. Thank God, we sigh, that we are not alone! We are bound in love with one another.

Being with one another and for one another then suddenly infuses life with a wholly different content. Instead of the preoccupation with things, there is also love. Suddenly everything seems worthwhile; suddenly everything has real content. Love sheds light on the meaning of life.

Modern society is very much aware of this. Even those depressing novels and plays that never tire of analysing and describing the horror and loathsomeness of the human condition cannot avoid the miracle of the neighbor as an unfathomable source of comfort.

cannot fly from the land. They need, sometimes, a half a mile of water before they can become airborne. The tide probably scooped up the silly bird and delivered it back into the water.

"Bye, Dad. And thanks."

How nice to hear on the phone, through the mist of long ago, the crazy, loony, laughing voice of my son.

"100 Rebels killed in U.S. Offensive in Western Iraq."

"Trial for two in Rwanda Genocide."

"Locust Swarm in southeastern Nigeria."

In this respect, the book of Ecclesiastes is in tune with contemporary awareness. The Preacher sees things in very similar terms. In essence, everything that we do in life he sees as stricken with meaninglessness, futility and vanity. But bind two or three together in a genuine relationship and suddenly everything looks very different.

Why? Well, says the Preacher, then you can help each other. If one person falls into a deep hole along the way, the other is there to pull him out. And then if you go on and have to stay over on a cold winter's night, you can keep each other warm. If the journey continues through even more inhospitable places and you are ambushed by bandits, two of you could possibly resist, while all by yourself you'd be helpless.

These are simple examples drawn from daily life. Yet, they contain immense comfort. We can spring to the aid of one another not just in material ways but in all sorts of ways, small and large, to help pull one another through. This is especially true in the emotional awareness that often overcomes us that we exist for one another. We experience this in marriage and in friendship, but also in the team spirit of the workplace, in a social club or in a choral group.

I think the Preacher has in mind some other kinds of awareness as well. In the first place, there comes the awareness that together we really can eventually accomplish something in all our toil and trouble. Our efforts are not wholly in vain - as long as we do them together.

We can't hope to achieve it all by a magical wave of the hand. That will never work. But



existence in and of ourselves. It is found in our neighbor. Or, at least it is illuminated through him. Not until we do things for the other do we find happiness.

The whole of Scripture, however, suggests the final observation that what the Preacher says here and what finds an echo in modern culture is not yet the whole truth. Not that I wish to deny the importance of being a neighbor or fellow-man to one another. But, as far as I can see, one cannot find the final and only meaning of existence in one's neighbor.

That can only be found in God and in his unfathomable good pleasure. We are simply because it pleases the Creator that we are. In the final analysis, our neighbor is nothing less than a pointer

to our Creator.

together and after awhile - then perhaps something will really be accomplished.

Secondly, he also has in mind the awareness that you can only really enjoy what you have accomplished when you enjoy it together. This, too, is typical. As long as man busies himself with things all by himself, even though it amounts to something it may just as well be nothing because he cannot enjoy what he has accomplished. Enjoying things is a social activity. In order to really possess things, we must possess them together.

Thirdly, we don't just accomplish something with each other and enjoy it together, but we also exert ourselves for each other. This adds the final touch to our activity. But we never wholly trust this idea. On the contrary, we think that to find happiness in things we must first and foremost be striving for ourselves and possess things for ourselves.

But this is a terrible error. For we do not ultimately possess the meaning of things and of our own

But if the ground of all things resides in God's good pleasure, then the meaning of life cannot really be found in one's neighbor. There must then also be meaning in things themselves as things. I should begin to love them as well. Then the solitude in which I am busy with things simply as things can also be filled with love and joy.

And further, beyond one's neighbor and fellow-man, there is the community, society, the state, and history. If I live in faith and hold fast to a trust in God's goodness, I will also believe that my working existence also has meaning insofar as it is a useful part of these larger wholes.

If we become wholly preoccupied with self and other and community, a certain sappiness creeps into our thinking and doing. Then it becomes all about mutual concern, and that is not really the way things were intended to be, at least not in the Bible.

Churches

Centennial celebrations

Tymen Hofman

The Canadian Christian Reformed Church is telling its story, the story of 100 years of church life and service. It is a fine and compelling story, worth celebrating. And celebrating is what the churches are doing this summer of 2005, all over Canada, from West to East, in some way in each one of its 250 congregations. And the celebration is spilling over into the United States CRCs.

The spotlight of the Centennial activities has been focused on the Sea-to-Sea Bike Tour, the greatest biking event ever to be undertaken in Canada, or for that matter, anywhere in the world. Over 100 bikers, day after day for 71 days, biking from the water of the Pacific in Vancouver to the Atlantic in Halifax. And all to put the spotlight on God's blessing of the CRC and on its mission as a church in these challenging times.

So it would be expected that the first CRC congregation to be organized in Canada would pull all the stops in the celebration of its birth. Our expectations have not been disappointed. The celebration was a magnificent experience of remembrance, gratitude, and fellowship, well beyond the most lively expectation of the former members who came from afar to celebrate with the congregation. The organizers of the celebrative weekend are to be highly commended and thanked.

But before further elaborating on the celebration, a bit of history is in order, for the celebrating church was not one congregation. The original church formed in Southern Alberta on November 16, 1905 underwent a remarkable transition, from one congregation to two. When the Nijverdal Christian Reformed Church was organized it was, in a sense, like twins in a womb. It had an East side and a West side, and each side had its own worship service under one consistory. This went on until 1911 when two congregations were formally organized as the Monarch CRC and the Granum CRC. So the "twins" were brought to birth. In 1947 the Monarch Church was moved to Nobleford. So both can lay claim to being "the first CRC in Canada."

As you might imagine, this was a natural for some good friendly ecclesiastical rivalry, especially when the celebrating was in high gear. This showed itself when the sign in front of the Granum church boldly declared: "First Christian Reformed Congregation

in Canada." This was a challenge to the pranksters of the Nobleford Church, who sneaked in during the night and hung a large "Wannabe" plus a smiley-face above the claim of being "First." Granum's pastor, Jim Zondervan, finds himself sort of caught in the middle since he also served the Nobleford church for six years. But the ribbing is all in good spirits.

And the two churches cooperated in the celebrations, doing as much together as they could. They held a joint picnic at the Park Lake Provincial Park which they were able to rent and use exclusively for their members and guests. It was held on Friday, July 1, the day that their church picnics have been held for most of the past 100 years. On Saturday they took their members and guests on a history tour organized and directed by Dr. Don Sinnema, a son of the Granum church and a history buff, who teaches at Trinity Christian College. He has a new book, *The First Dutch Settlement in Alberta*, detailing the story of the early pioneers from information gleaned from correspondents in the area to Dutch language publications in the US and in the Netherlands. The tour filled six large school vans and lasted for about six hours.

But the Saturday night banquets and the Sunday services were held separately, with the focus distinctly on each congregation. All of Granum's five former ministers still living were present while only one of Nobleford's five former pastors was missing, because of advance illness. All were greeted and honored, with most of them taking some part in the worship services on Sunday morning and afternoon. Some invited dignitaries found themselves shuttling from one venue to the other in order to bring their greetings and to pick up some good experiences.

But picnics and dinners and services come to an end no matter how long they last, and one is left with a bout of nostalgia when it is all over. You'd like to capture and hold onto the experiences of fellowship though we all know it can't be done. We must live with memories. But we have ways of preserving experiences by writing books, etc. And Granum and Nobleford have made ample provision for that as well. The Granum book was planned and written with a view to being available during the celebrations, while the Nobleford book was planned to record also the activities

Canadian church member idol?

For the past 3 years, CTV has ruled the television ratings with *Canadian Idol*. *Canadian Idol*, like all "Idol" shows in each country (there are 13 countries that have an "Idol" type show), is basically a talent search gone high speed. The show invites Canadians ages 16-26 across the country to audition by singing and performing a song. The list of singers gets smaller and smaller until, through the votes of Canadian viewers, one Canadian idol is crowned.

To win the contest, one needs the right style, look and sound. The champion also needs talent, intangibles, pedigree, confidence and sacrifice. The show dubs itself as a "search for the best singer in Canada," while it is in reality, like most things today, a popularity contest where the winner is the one who entertains the best.

While *Canadian Idol* is entertaining and does give singers opportunities that would normally not be available, this show is still about marketing a product and trying to sell it to the masses.

While watching an episode a number of weeks ago, I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like if an organization put together a Canadian church member idol contest. A contest in where individuals can audition to prove that they themselves are the best church member in all of Canada.

Surely there would be a humanitarian component to the Canadian church idol contest. The winner would have to prove that they could be Christ-like in all circumstances. Naturally there would be a tithing challenge; and, I would submit, 10 percent just wouldn't cut it. How about dress? Surely the winner would not only wear clean clothes but would have to have his or her clothes match and be ironed.

And could we crown a Canadian church idol who couldn't sing? Surely the winner should not only be able to sing in harmony but should also be able to tackle intricate rhythms and be able to sing with organ, piano or guitar. She would also have to be able to sing from the Hymnal or songbook, the overhead and the small insert that is sometimes stuck in the bulletin (this would also require good eyesight or the ability to remember glasses every service).

There might possibly be a tally on how many people the winner had brought to Christ and this

of the three days. So everyone who wished to have the Granum book and had \$75 could take one home. Fortunately I have a "friend" who presented me with a copy.

The book is entitled *100 Years of God's Grace*, and if the grace experienced by the church is indicated by the size of the book, then the grace of God was, indeed, abundant. It is a tome. It is 450 pages long, sized 8 1/2 x 11, in beautiful dark blue hardcover. It details the history of the church, well researched and written by Don Sinnema, plus the insightful recalling of the ministry of each of its 14 pastors, a pile of "memories" by individual members, and a goodly number of community tales only

tangentially related to the church. It also has write-ups on every family and individual who ever darkened the door of the Granum church. There are oodles of pictures. For anyone who knows a bit about the congregation the book is a fascinating read though it isn't always great literature. It was really produced by the members themselves, each telling their own story.

What makes the book especially interesting is the fact that this is likely the most honest congregational history that has ever been written. Generally speaking, these histories are exercises in gilding the lily and in keeping the skeletons in the closet. Most of them reveal little need for God's grace.

My window seat

Mendell Hoekstra

would unquestionably require marketing skills and the ability to sell to the masses. One might even have money to put on a billboard "YOU SHALL NOT BE BORED IN CHURCH." If the winner had children, they would assuredly be sent to Christian day schools to prove their loyalty to their baptismal vows.

Church attendance would of course be mandatory, including morning and evening services – as would attendance at all prayer services and congregational meetings. The winner would more than likely be a saintly person who talks to everyone after church, especially newcomers, instead of the same seven people every week.

The winner of Canadian Church Member Idol would probably be middle-aged. Young people would be considered too liberal and the older people too stuck in the older ways. And to prove worthy of the crown, the winner would have to demonstrate to others that he could not only concentrate throughout the whole sermon but do so without the help of a glucose saturated candy (glucose would be a banned substance and show up in the pop urine test).

Thankfully, there is no Canadian church member idol contest. Thankfully, there is no judging on style, pedigree or looks.

Matthew, a tax collector, was not only welcomed as a follower of Jesus, but became one of Jesus' disciples. In those days tax collectors were below prostitutes on the social scale. The Pharisees asked why Jesus was hanging out with sinners. Jesus taught us that he came for the sick. Hosea reminds us that God desires mercy not sacrifice. The thief beside Jesus on the cross was welcomed into heaven at the last moments of his life. There are numerous instances in Scripture that show us that Jesus came for the common person and not necessarily the winner of contests.

Jesus said before Pilate "My Kingdom is not of this world" to illustrate that his kingdom is built through faith and not works.

Thankfully, Jesus takes us as we are.

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Not so this book. Stories of stumbling and failure in the fellowship are told without being gossipy, mostly without names. Some people writing their own stories have revealed chapters in their lives that could cause some lifting of the eye brow. It all leaves me amazed. But then, we are living in a new age in which people are inclined to tell it like it is. The Granum book has been touched by some of that spirit, and that to the good.

We'll come back to more of this celebration in future issues. Tom Polet will give his impressions of the Nobleford banquet while I'll take you to the picnic. And we may do a piece jointly on the worship services.

Choices

From a life of multiplicity to a sabbatical

A transition is what happens inside your head after the external change has already occurred. William Bridges, Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes

What a circus act we women perform every day of our lives....This is not the life of simplicity but the life of multiplicity....It leads not to unification but to fragmentation. It does not bring grace; it destroys the soul.... Women need solitude in order to find again the true essence of themselves.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *The Gift From the Sea*

William certainly knew what he was talking about. Lots of things happened in my head during my sabbatical year. And Anne also had keen insight into the lives of women. At the same time, I think contemporary men who are main breadwinners as well as involved husbands and fathers can suffer the same kind of fragmentation she believes women experience. Anne's suggestion is to include solitude into our way of life that feeds our soul. And so, whenever my head felt scrambled during the last year, I headed for the soothing sounds of the sea.

External change

Last year I confided to my readers I was taking an unpaid sabbatical from counseling so I could work on getting myself "unstuck." I also went to a retreat on "Transitions" to learn how to deal with my situation in a healthy way. Still, the decision to give up the work I loved was a painful one.

The external change that threw my life out of balance was my spouse's unexpected early retirement a year and a half before my sabbatical. Somehow the change in his life affected the rhythms of our marital, family and community life. Of course, his retirement was cause for celebration. A surprise retirement party with a large thirty-year or something cast of characters. He also received a beautiful watch from his affectionate staff and I think they were genuinely sorry to see him go. In terms of our family, we were immensely grateful for the breadwinner role he had taken upon himself so many years ago.

A way of life

My reality as a therapist, a wife, a mother of adult children and a daughter of an aging parent, as well as a

grandmother of several delightful children, was that I had been juggling roles for a long time. It was my way of life. As the third oldest of a large family I had been multitasking since my early teens. When I married a student in the late sixties I simply continued and combined working outside the home with early family life. Over time it became more like a big fat family life, which included large extended families. Soon I no longer worked outside the home but began studies towards a university degree while raising four children. In short, my life was always busy and full. When my spouse retired, I continued to work for some time. However, I soon realized I was running out of steam.

Processing change

Theorists have different opinions about the number of stages we have in our lives. Whether we have three, eight, or eleven, with every change there is a time of transition during which we do all kinds of mental exercises to say goodbye to one stage while trying to find a foothold in the other. That is what William Bridges is talking about in the above quote. We try to make sense of it in our mind after the fact and the reality is – we need to grow but most of us do so only under protest!

Best selling author Joan Anderson paints a vivid picture of change and transition in simple and every day language in her book *A Year by the Sea* and the sequel, *An Unfinished Marriage*. Here she writes about a cross-road in her own life and how she went to live alone for a year by the sea in her rustic cottage on Cape Cod. That year away repaired, regenerated and renewed her spirit but also became a source of creative inspiration. Because of the overwhelming response to her book, which was on the New York Times bestseller list for 30 weeks, she now mentors groups of women to find space for themselves so they can live more joyous and balanced lives.

While most of us do not have the luxury of taking a year off, I did manage to create a more balanced life according to my immediate priorities. For instance, I spend more time with my aging mother, my adult children and grandchildren. I took a memoir writing course. My spouse and I trained for and hiked the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island. We were also fortunate to be part of a work group from a local Christian Reformed Church to

build an education wing in Port au Prince, Haiti. When we came home we were trained by a CRWRC team leader for disaster relief should God calls us to that work in the future. And on our home turf we enjoyed our local bike trails as well as some genuine leisure moments sitting on outdoor sidewalks sipping espresso coffee. I was finally having a taste of an unrushed life in a way I had not had for many, many years!

Sounds of the sea

And so, at the end of this sabbatical year what I know for sure is, I continue to need times of aloneness that will help me find my way back to my whole self. At first my walks by the sea felt eerily lonely under the expanse of the big sky but over time they turned into moments of soothing solitude. And while both Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen have written plenty on the need for solitude, how often do we hear that over time motherhood and the complexity of women's lives sears our synapses!

We are always on call, and our time evolves from soothing a crying infant to reading with a restless toddler to listening to a distraught teenager while attending to the needs of those around us including husbands, extended family members, friends and a variety of community concerns. To this potpourri of activity we stir and mix dashes of our own work or interests day after day, year after year. Eventually, concentration fades and flickers while distractions steadily gain power, feeding and fuelling an ongoing cycle of fragmentation.

And so I am no longer on sabbatical but will continue to take a break from counselling for some time. But what I also know for sure is we need to honor our struggles and let them be stepping stones to a deeper sense of who we are becoming while accepting the comfort of always being unfinished. I also wonder if we can ever be ready for the next stage of our lives. At the same time I feel fortunate I now can appreciate the gentler side of myself.

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Imperfect television...continued from page 11



What I see in both *Lost* and *Desperate Housewives* are the stories of struggling people. In *Housewives*, every one of the characters finds the American dream falls short. All of the housewives feel entitled to something that they just don't have. They want their versions of the perfect life, searching for love, security, control and relationships. They see all the men around them as flawed and sisterhood is the only thin string that connects these women together.

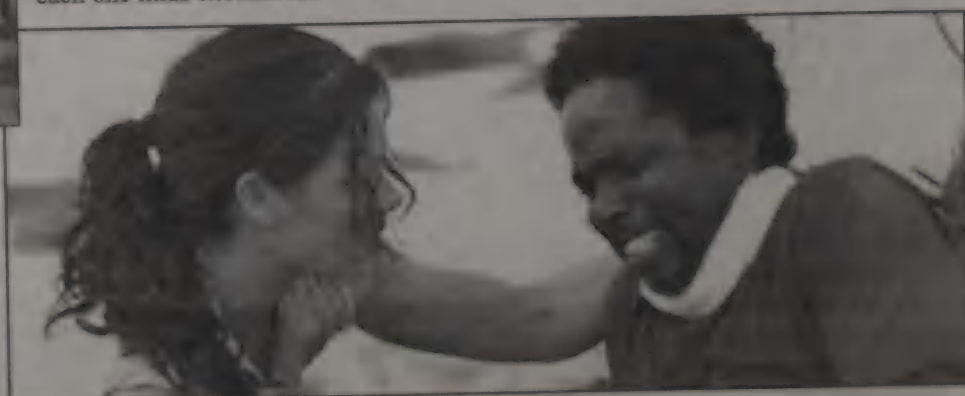
In *Lost*, one character, Locke, believes that the island has

the holes in their lives. To watch them on the island, one sees their opportunities to make things right and to start over with these new people around them. Here too for the characters, these relationships are flawed and disappointing, but only

called them there to have a second chance. All the characters are flawed: all have in their pasts broken relationships caused by what they themselves have done. In their flashbacks, each one finds excuses for

their small community can keep them secure.

I'm glad that scripted series are making a comeback. They will add to our stories of conflicted characters that fill our bookshelves, video libraries and TV guide. Here too we see stories as reflections of ourselves searching for redemption.



AUGUST 15, 2005

Opinion

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

Dangerous fanatics

I find myself thinking more and more frequently about how different the world is now compared to when I was a child. Though some changes have been positive and even positively exciting – the rise of the personal computer and the Internet, for instance – most of the changes I ruminate over seem to be more disturbing mutations than benign modifications. Perhaps my regular thinking about negative changes of the last four decades indicates that I'm coasting down the other side of the famous age hill (as in, "You're 'over the hill'"). And perhaps I'm not only coasting but picking up speed on the way down. Well, I do admit to having passed my 50th birthday a few years back. But that's not old. However, I will also admit to caring less about some of the issues that used to get me up in arms – churches ordaining women, for example (more about that some other time).

So why am I gloomy about the future of our society and our very civilization? Have I turned into a curmudgeon? A pessimist? A hyper-Calvinist? Is there an antidote in associating with optimistic types who will convince me that in every generation there are those who lament the present and wish for the good ol' days, but things are no worse than they ever were?

When Larry King asked Billy Graham during the latter's recent New York City Crusade whether he thinks people and our current world are worse now than in days gone by, Graham confidently said no. "Sin is sin," he asserted. He added (I'm paraphrasing): God hasn't changed his standards or requirements. People have always been estranged from God, apart from Jesus Christ.

The truth of that is tough to argue (though there are plenty of people who do – including some Christians). But if Graham were to say that expressions of sin and unbelief are no more blatant or pervasive than they ever were, and that there is not more, and deeper, accommodation to secularism even from within the household of God, and that living a wholehearted, faithful Christian life is not becoming ever more difficult in today's world, I'd question his conclusions.

I've been especially struck recently by Bible passages which speak of suffering for our Lord's sake and even welcoming that suffering. If you read any of the numerous international Christian news sources, you'll know that in many countries today Christians are indeed suffering intensely – and dying painful deaths – for Christ's sake.

Some of the evangelicals I knew when I was in school "suffered for Christ's sake" when they accosted persons unexpectedly, asking whether those persons were saved. The results of that method of "going into all the world and preaching the gospel" frequently seemed unhelpful to the Lord's cause. But we Reformed folks shunned that approach, and secretly, even snidely, figured

the evangelicals' "suffering" was their own fault. In any case, we North American Christians haven't been used to being persecuted, much less jailed or killed for taking a Luther-like stand for God against the forces of Darkness (forces which assail and sometimes penetrate the church too – see Revelation 1-3).

However, our position in North America is changing rapidly. It would not surprise me if within my lifetime we Christians will be asked to make a clear choice: confess Christ aloud and suffer on his account, or deny him and slink away into the secular night. It's already happening to varying degrees. Faith is increasingly seen as something which should be utterly private, and which, in fact, is dangerous to society if meshed with the public square. Thus, Charles Schumer, the senior Senator from my state, could say in June 2003 during William Pryor's confirmation hearings for 11th Circuit Appeals Court judge, "His beliefs are so well known, so deeply held, that it's very hard to believe, very hard to believe that they're not going to deeply influence the way he comes about saying, 'I will follow the law.' And that would be true of anybody who had very, very deeply held views." Translation: we can't approve for that bench (much less for the Supreme Court) any person who has "very, very deeply held views" – that is, views which arise from his or her religious faith. "Very, very deeply held" secular views are ok. Strong secular views are ok because secularism is not a religion (it is assumed). It is argued: we know what deeply held religious views can lead to; we need look only as far as the Islamist terrorists who readily commit suicide for their faith and take others with them on the way down.

It's not a large step to the notion that anyone with faith strong enough to move mountains (in Jesus's terms) is a fanatic. It's only a matter of where you are on the "religious" scale. And fanatics, eventually, need to be locked away. That returns us to the probability of having to suffer for Christ in North America in the 21st century.

Janet Epp Buckingham (director of law and public policy for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada) asserted in a column early this year that Conservatives, many of whom are evangelical Christians, are presumed by the press to have "hidden agendas" when it comes to their involvement in politics or other aspects of public life. The same attitude is assumed by much of the American mainstream press toward Christians who are Republicans. In fact, Buckingham noted, the *Toronto Star* expressed deep concern about "candidates tied to faith groups," likening them to "Bush Republicans who want to run [people's] lives." And all such people, on both sides of the border, are "fundamentalists" – a bad word in anybody's lexicon. Assumptions are made about them but no

one bothers to interview such people about their views, Epp wrote.

That's not as true in the U.S. now, in the George W. Bush era, as it was a decade or two ago. American evangelicals have hit the mainstream. But there still appears to be deep suspicion (if not loathing bordering on hatred) of Christians whose views clash with where the press assumes intelligent, fair-minded people ought to be on the litmus-test issues of abortion and gay rights.

It is difficult to underestimate the role the national press (in both countries) is playing in gradually shaping views on these issues. The "danger" to society (they say) from any of us who take a public stand against abortion and gay marriage, for instance, comes from our fundamental intolerance. Interfering with a "woman's right to choose" is a gross form of sexism. Opposing gay marriage is simply a matter of gross civil injustice. We open-minded secularists are allowed to have an agenda. You Christians aren't. End of story. (Epp Buckingham calls this "nothing short of religious profiling.")

South of the 49th parallel, the compartmentalization of faith has also led to a weirdly stringent belief in the separation of church and state on the part of a small number of people who are offended by the mere mention of God in the public square – courtesy, they believe, of that venerated document the U.S. Constitution. In truth, the framers of the Constitution would be startled indeed to learn that their carefully honed document and its Bill of Rights (First Amendment, ratified Dec. 15, 1791: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...") implies that public references to God on government-owned property are instances of the state "establishing religion." Thus the odd – and quite unhelpful – June 27 Supreme Court ruling barring courthouse displays of the Ten Commandments if they have "religious" intent, but not if they have merely historical intent.

Though as individual Christians it's easy to feel overwhelmed in today's world, we are, of course, part of Christ's Body. And there are countless signs of the Spirit's work around the world, frequently in places where we least expect to see it. For now, just one example:

Only 7.5 percent of Britons go to church. As in North America, many people are particularly disillusioned with the mainline churches. But also as here, there are shining exceptions. Holy Trinity Brompton (London), an evangelical charismatic parish in the Church of England, is one. Twenty years ago it developed the now international Alpha program – a worship-centred method of instilling or renewing faith through acquaintance or re-acquaintance with what C.S. Lewis called "mere

Christianity." (For details see this website: <www.ccli.com/WorshipResources/Articles.cfm?itemID=9>) The Spirit is rejuvenating believers and bringing in unbelievers in Europe and North America by the thousands, one parish at a time, through what began in just one congregation.

In a June 18 column in London's *Telegraph*, Danny Kruger told his readers about Holy Trinity Brompton's annual "Home Focus Bible Week," held at a popular holiday camp the week before. But Kruger's column also brings us full circle, back to faith-related-to-public-life. He asked, on behalf of his readers: "...What is prompting the evangelical surge?" His answer: "It is partly the churches themselves, which have shrugged off the flummery of established religion. Charles Moore, on this page on Saturday, quoted John Buchan on radical Muslims: 'They want to live face to face with God without a screen of ritual and images and priest-craft.' So do we. The same desire for integrity and openness that produced Protestantism in the first place is stoking a new revival, casual in style but solid in substance. And it's that solidity which is attractive."

Kruger then recognized something even more fundamental. "If the churches are getting better at pulling people in, the outside world is pushing them that way, too. *Cultural relativism has little hold on the heart*" (my emphasis). "One popular response is a further moral unravelling, the slackers' celebration of irony and boredom. The other, more satisfying, response is faith." Kruger concluded with this analysis, low-key and carefully worded by our standards, but by British standards zealous in its call to return to a cultural house built upon a sure foundation:

"It is time we remembered that all the 'values' we want to protect came down to us from Sinai and the Sermon on the Mount. The liberal system is a house of many mansions with room for all faiths, including atheism, but it rests on Judaeo-Christian foundations.

"Most people choose to live in the building, not the foundations; but they should not imagine the foundations are not there. For if they are not, when the whirlwind whose first terrible gusts we have felt comes in full force, the house will not be lifted safe and intact from the ground, like Dorothy's in Kansas, but blown to pieces. Our house, like the church itself, must be founded on a rock."

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY; she may be contacted via e-mail at <mvantil@adelphia.net>



Opinion

Mainly on Money

What is the root of all evil? Lust for oil

How long can we live without oxygen? Four minutes? How long can we live without the energy released by fossil fuels?

Consider that one gram of oil gives as much energy as a manual laborer can deliver in a day's work. Consider that a plane load of tourists flying from Vancouver to see the Great Pyramid of Egypt consumes as much energy as was used in building this antique structure. Or consider that running a domestic clothes-washer consumes as much energy as it would take a crane to lift an entire house 7 metres up in the air.

We use oil like we breathe oxygen and are hardly aware of the massive amount of energy we consume in our daily life. What oxygen is to our lungs is fossil fuel to our existence. How long can we live without it?

Carl Jung, one of the fathers of psychology, remarked once that "people cannot stand too much reality." The naked reality is that everything we do, every item we use, whatever we eat is created by our energy slaves. That relationship is ending.

Reality is that we are entering uncharted territory. I am an optimist, a person who recognizes reality and tries to make the best – optimus in Latin – of it. Our entire society only functions when there is ample black gold, more than we can use, so that prices are low. That situation is history. We now are at a turning point.

This year or next the world will pump the most oil it will ever produce. After that it's downhill; supplies will decline while our energy appetite will still be growing. There'll be lots left, exactly half; but that'll be much harder to extract, more costly to get, of much poorer quality and located mostly in places where the people hate Westerners. Much if it will never see the inside of a fuel tank.

In the meantime, we are more hooked than ever, carboholics, addicted to finite energy in a worse way than any alcoholic to booze or a compulsive gambler to slot machines. On the timeline of history, financial welfare founded on finite fossil fuels will have been a fast-fleeting phenomenon.

Gasoline shortages will burst the real estate and debt bubble. Former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul Volcker, a pillar of the Establishment, predecessor to the other high-priest of banking, Alan Greenspan, with access to economic information beyond my reach, said: "Circumstances seem to me as dangerous and intractable as any I can remember.... What really concerns me is that there seems to be so little willingness or capacity to do anything about it" (quoted in *The Economist*, April 16, p.12).

Volcker chose his words carefully: "dangerous and intractable." His observation echoes Carl Jung: little "willingness or capacity" to face reality. That was in March when oil was still an affordable Forty. It then moved swiftly to Fifty. Now it's hugging \$60 per barrel. Volcker is no fool. While oil production is at or near its peak, US debt is

still growing at \$2 billion a day, and owing it China and her neighbors.

Reality is that the USA simply can't battle the bankers who finance their Iraq war and whose factories supply Wal-Mart so that we all can have the lowest prices every day. However, everyday low-prices come at a high cost later.

Now China determines oil demand. Thanks to our friends in the Far East, we'll pay \$1.50 per litre by next spring, rising to \$5.00 in five years. Why five years? Now even Exxon Mobil Corporation, the largest of the large oil giants, admits to peak oil. Its report, *The Outlook for Energy: A 2030 View*, forecasts a peak in just five years.

As a former real estate appraiser, I can see deep trouble for the so-called "exurbanites," those who work in the city, but have moved out to escape high dwelling values. They are already submerged in maximum mortgages, and, weighted down by other debts, stay afloat on low interest rates. Even a slight rise there will translate in more inflation, which, combined with the greater cost for gasoline, natural gas and electricity, will drown them, and, unable to pay their loans, will lead to foreclosures and to plummeting property prices.

Banks beware. Urban residential units, where people can walk or take transit to work, will go up, so these 'exurbans' won't be able to afford that kind of accommodation either.

I hope that I am wrong, but if energy prices soar, all over North America ten of thousands will be ruined. They will be the new refugees, will migrate to the more livable cities – not Phoenix or Las Vegas, which the deserts will reclaim, places where rents are already unreasonable and social services already strained. There they will compete with immigrants for the lowest-level housing and jobs. In the American cities, where guns are as numerous as pesky mosquitos in rural Tweed, matters will probably get ugly. Bullets have a bitter bite.

Welcome to a Brave New World, a world of permanent crises, not only involving energy, but also climate change, epidemic disease and population overshoot, all producing higher orders of trouble. Carl Jung said that people can't stand much reality. Half the battle in facing difficulty is to be psychologically prepared.

Back to Iraq, via a detour. Remember Gomery? The judge who presided over that sponsorship spectacle? Well, down-south something similar is brewing, but, as befits our esteemed American neighbor, much, much bigger. Gomery's expertise in unraveling the mysterious ways in which money can vanish is urgently needed there. You think that \$250 million Canadian is a lot of money to blow on keeping Canada together. How about \$8.8 billion American – more than \$10 billion Canadian or 40 times as much – not accounted for in Iraq?

The *London Review of Books*, in its July 7 issue, digs into six sets of documents – all available on the amazing web – in which Ed Harriman follows the auditors into Iraq. Money makes people do the funniest things. What would you do if you were given \$25 million in cash? One private military contractor received that much from Paul Bremer's Baghdad's office – he was until June 2004 the American proconsul in Iraq – and the auditors could not find any supporting documentation what happened to that fortune.

Of more than \$23 million cash given to another corporate mercenary, there are only records of \$6,306,836 paid to others for services received. Two private enterprise soldiers left Iraq without accounting for \$750,000 each.

That's only chickenfeed compared to what Kellogg, Brown & Root, a division of Halliburton, the company once headed by Vice President Dick Cheney, did and is doing. It charged the Pentagon \$88 million for 3 million meals that were never served, and has been paid \$10 billion, much of which has not been substantiated. While quartermastering US forces in Iraq and charging them \$1.39 per day for troops sleeping in tents, Halliburton's own managers stayed in 5 star hotels in Kuwait at a cost of \$400.00 per night. All billed to the tax-payer.

War is waste. Always. One of Halliburton's contracts is for transporting supplies between American bases. Fleets of new Mercedes Benz trucks, costing \$85,000 each, continuously travel up and down Iraq's highways, even empty if there is nothing to haul. They all roll along in the desert heat and through sand storms without replacement air and oil filters or spare tires. Too dangerous to stop for repairs. If one breaks down it's abandoned and set on fire.

That's what happens when you are paid on a cost-plus basis, then add on profit. The higher the cost, the larger the profit.

War is waste. Always. Capitalism is defined as 'creative destruction'. War is its ultimate ally, and the Pentagon its perfect paymaster. Cash is king in Iraq. On April 12, 2004 the CPA – the Coalition Provisional Authority – handed over \$1.5 billion in cash – CASH! – to a local courier. The money, fresh \$100 bills shrink-wrapped on pallets, which filled three Blackhawk helicopters, came from oil sales under the UN's "Oil for Food Program,"

and had been entrusted by the UN Security Council to the Americans to be spent on behalf of the Iraqi people. It never reached them.

No, that's not true. It was given to a person who was not checked

out before, according to a CPA's inspector's report. You can be sure that his relatives and he himself are not paupers anymore.

Paul Bremer himself kept a slush fund of nearly \$600 million cash for which there is no paper work. \$200 million of this was kept in a room for which the key, when the guard went out for lunch, was left on his desk. Tempting, to say the least.

Of course, this was all Iraqi money, not American tax dollars, so supposedly not as important. The administration was as careless with Iraqi lives as it was with Iraqi moneys. During the two years of American occupation it has been estimated by both the Brookings Institute and IBC (Iraqi Body Count) that between 22,838 and 25,869 Iraqis were killed by American bullets or bombs or through lawlessness. How many men, women and children really died, only God knows. Iraqis too are created in the image of God and are as precious to the Lord as the lives of Americans or Brits.

Why this carnage? Is this desperate and useless struggle waged solely to preserve SUV- sustained Suburbia in the USA? If so, it indeed cries to heaven. With apologies to the apostle Paul who reminded his young friend in Timothy 6:10 that "The lust for money is the root of all evil," for modern states "The lust for oil" has become the root of all evil. This evil is now all-pervasive.

Says the *London Review of Books* article: "Not only the Americans are guilty of lack of accountability. In January this year SIGIR, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, issued a report detailing evidence of fraud, corruption and waste by the Iraqi Interim Government, when Bremer was in charge. They found that \$8.8 billion – the entire Iraqi Interim Government spending from October 2003 through June 2004 – was not properly accounted for.... There is simply no way of knowing how much of the \$8.8 billion went to pay for private militia and into private pockets."

Gomery, go to Iraq. There is the real challenge.

Earlier columns can be seen at 'hielema.ca.'
Bert Hielema
(bert@hielema.ca)



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Classifieds

Birthdays

Praise God for he is Good!
We celebrate the **80th Birthday** of

Siemie (Hoorntje) Tiesma

on August 11th, 2005. Born in the town of Siddeburen, Groningen, in the year 1925, to parents
Allen Hoorntje nee Olthof & Henderik Hoorntje

Her birthday is celebrated by her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren:

Allen & Henk Kloosterhof
Yang-Soo and Ming-Jung
Leo & Yvonne Weverink
Jonathan
Sarah & Steve Van Breda - Reuben, Nadine
Rachel and Hannelle
Jan (1999) & Graeme Newbury
Brendan and Jordan
George & Sue Tiesma
Jessica and Austin

You are invited to attend an **Open House** in her honor on August 13, 2005 at the St. Ablan the Martyr Parish Hall from two to four in the afternoon. (Hall is located behind the Anglican Church 537 Main St. Glen Williams, ON.)

Correspondence: Sieds & Siemie Tiesma
11 Karen Dr. Glen Williams ON L7G 2V1

With praise and thanksgiving to the Lord,
we hope to celebrate the **90th Birthday** of our
mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

**Femmie Martens (Sikkens)**

on September 3, 2005 D.V.

Congratulations and best wishes from all of us:

Roelie & Henk Katerberg
Albert & Willy Martens
Femmie & Sam Terpstra
Willie & Adrian Kooy
Al & Betty Martens
Ralph & Denise Martens

Best wishes also from your 21 grandchildren and their spouses. Happy Birthday Oma Elevator from your 20 great grandchildren.

Address: Femmie Martens
CT 1201 - 7900 McLaughlin Rd S
Brampton ON L6A 5A7

Personals

Widower, 69,
seeks companion for
helping each other
in continuing to live
for Christ.

Reply to: Box #2748

c/o Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St
St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

Widow, 70 years old,
would like to meet
a Christian man.
Reply to: Box #2740

Anniversaries

Clarkson, 1955

September 3

Brampton, 2005

With gratitude to the Lord, our parents,

**JOHN AND MARGO VANDERLAAN** (nee VanHarten)

look forward to celebrating their
50th Wedding Anniversary on September 3, 2005 D.V.

Mom and Dad, Opa and Oma,

Thank you for your love and your faith during all these years.

May you continue to know and experience God's blessings in your life together.

With love from your children and grandchildren:

Clarence & Irene Vanderlaan, Madoc, Ontario
Jessica Sherban & Brad - Ethan and Jesselyn, Stephen Sherban, Renee
Ariene & Mike Whitehead, Guelph, Ontario
Chris & Tracey, Josh
Jackie & Rick Elgersma, Dunnville, Ontario
Lindsay & Brent, Meaghan, Nicole, Stephen
Ron & Kathy Vanderlaan, Lansing, Michigan
Zack, Katie, Maddie
Marianne & Jeff Schenk, Georgetown, Ontario
Janelle, Kirstin, Lareina

Open House will be held on Saturday, September 3, 2005
1:30 - 3:30 p.m. in Horizon Hall at King Tower Holland Christian Homes
Best wishes only, please.

Home address: 1504-35 Kingknoll Drive, Brampton ON L6Y 5G5

Anniversaries

Groningen
1955

September 6

Oakville
2005

With thankful hearts and praise to God
for his many blessings
we celebrate the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of

**SIMON AND MARTHA KOUWENHOVEN**
nee Stellingwerff

With love from your children and grandchildren:
Wendy & Philip La Pierre, Kentville, N.S.

David, Marissa, Daniel and Alexander
Steven (deceased)

Joanne & Glenn Stronks, Kakabeka Falls, ON
Joshua, Amanda

Franciska Kouwenhoven, Toronto, ON

We invite you to an **Open House**,
to be held on Monday, September 5, 2005
from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at Paletta Lakefront Park,
4250 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, ON
Best wishes only.

Home address: 2409 Marine Drive
Oakville ON L6L1C6
skouw@sympatico.ca

Sept. 11, 2005 DUTCH SERVICE

will be held in the **Ancaster**

Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m.

Rev. John Hellinga will be preaching.

Obituary

Maasland, the Netherlands
June 22, 1913

Grimsby, Ontario
July 9, 2005

*I love the Lord for he heard my voice;
He heard my cry for mercy. Ps. 116:1*

AAFJE DE RAAF (nee van Roon)

went home to be with her Lord and Savior

Beloved wife of the late Jan de Raaf.

Dear mother of: John & Amanda, Bowmanville
Clarence & Bev, Trenton
Lawrence & Brenda, Corbyville
Arie & Penny, Batavia
Neil & Carol, Welland
Ann & Wally, Oakville
Susan & Joe, Bowmanville

Oma will be missed by her
grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The funeral service was held July 13, 2005
at Maranatha CRC, St Catharines, Ontario,
Rev. Kevin de Raaf officiating.

Correspondence: Mr. Lawrence de Raaf
799 River Road, Corbyville ON K0K 1V0



September 2, 1955

EGBERT AND JEAN COUPERUS
(nee Vellenga)

Praise the Lord for **50 years of faithfulness**
to our parents.

Their children:

George & Sue Couperus
Sid & Sue Couperus
Stuart & Henrietta Couperus
John & Annette Brinkman
Along with 21 grandchildren &
2 great-grandchildren.

There will be an **Open House** at their home
on August 28, 2:00 to 4:00, D.V.
Best wishes only please.

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Hamilton, ON
1955

August 6

Surrey, BC
2005

And the Lord will guide you continually.
Isaiah 58:11a

With joy and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father,
who has kept them in his care and blessed us with their love and guidance,
we hope to celebrate D.V. the **50th Wedding Anniversary**
of our parents and grandparents.

REV. PETER AND MAAIKE BROUWER (nee Venema)

We thank God for the time he has given our parents together
and pray that God will grant you many more years together and with us,
your children and grandchildren.

Garret & Wendy Brouwer; Peter, Daniel, Jeffery, Rachel, Surrey, BC
Sonya & Ray Lenos; Annemarie, Jessica, Simcoe, Ont.
Peter & Joanne Brouwer; David, Alicia & Dan Groen, Emily, Heather, Jarvis, Ont.
Tricia & Dave Cook; Derek, Brian, Janine, Jelies, Grimsby, Ont.
Fred & Jacquie Brouwer; Krista, Amanda, Nathaniel, Janessa, Baden, Ont.
Mike & Marguente Brouwer; Nicole, Angela, Mikhaila, Abbotsford BC
Annette & Vince Van Randen; Theresa, Ryan, Jennifer, Surrey BC

We all hope D.V. to celebrate together with our parents
during the second two weeks of August in Ontario.

Address: 9032 158th Street, Surrey BC V4N 5G4

Obituary

The Lord took unto himself

BEREND HORENSMA

on Tuesday July 26, 2005 in his 82nd year
at the General & Marine Hospital, Collingwood.

Berend of Stayner, beloved husband of the late Wilhelmina (nee DeBoer) (1996).

Loving father of Barry & his wife Clara of Woodstock,
Jenny & her husband Brent Westerik of Richmond Hill
Liz & her husband Robert Kraan of Stayner.

Dear grandfather of Christina (John), Rosanna, Sarah (Phil), Jessica,
Gloria, Benjamin, Christopher, Derek, Andrew, Nathan, Joshua and Elijah
and great-grandfather of Leah, Benjamin, Nicholas and Nathaniel.
Sadly missed by his brother Henk and his wife Edmee of the Netherlands.

A Memorial Service was held at the Collingwood Christian Reformed Church
on July 28, 2005. Cremation with interment at Stayner Union Cemetery.
Remembrances to the C.N.I.B. Box 32002 Station BRMB Toronto ON M7Y 5R2

Classifieds / Job Opportunities

For Sale

Ruby model in Phase 2 of
**WELLINGSTONE
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Please call **(905) 389-1679**
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The Ruby has 894 square feet of space consisting of kitchen, living room, master bedroom with a walk-in closet and a second bedroom with a smaller closet. The Ruby also has a balcony/patio and a storage area.

For pictures of a Wellingsstone Homes and model suite, visit:
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TRAILER - 29 feet with 8 x 10 added sunroom. Located at Little Europe Resort in Bracebridge. Call: 905-451-6172

For Rent

2 bedrooms, large walkout basement **apartment** near **Waterdown**. 4 appliances, non-smoker/pets. Available July 1. \$750 utilities incl. Call: **905-690-3231** cell: **905-977-8595**

Guelph - Middle class raised bungalow with in-law suite on quiet crescent in West end of Guelph \$1400 **519-338-3920**

APARTMENT FOR RENT
above the Verstraete travel office in **St. Catharines**.
Contact Ria at **905 934 4414**

St. Catharines- Room in shared house with other **students**. On bus route. 350/mo includes utilities.
Call Anita at **905-684-5806**.

Apt for Rent

Two bedroom, bright, shared laundry, central vac, parking, **Holland Marsh**, 5 miles from Newmarket (Hwy #400 & 9) No smokers or pets. \$1,000 inclusive Available Nov 1st. Ralph & Emmy Lise, **905-775-4241**

Vacation Rental

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Available for Call

The council of Bethel CRC of Lacombe, Alberta wishes to announce that after a year of sabbatical studies,

Rev. Kirk MacNeil is available for call.
Pastor Kirk can be reached at 13011 - 39th Street Edmonton AB T5A 5A3 by email at **rational@telusplanet.net** or **janetandkirk@msn.com** or by phone at (780) 456-5362



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email: **guestsuite@lilbitcountry.ca** web: **www.lilbitcountry.ca**
For all the details and picture see the website or previous issues of CC.

Bethel CRC, Lacombe, Alberta

is seeking an experienced **full-time pastor** who is passionate for the Lord and a compassionate shepherd for people of all ages. He must be a good communicator, placing high priority on Biblical preaching and teaching, and be open to leading services in both traditional and contemporary styles. He must have a heart for the youth and show interest in their activities. He must be able to give council, ministry staff and leaders guidance in direction setting. He needs to equip us to be more effective to reach into the community.
Lacombe, a community of 10-11,000 people is located in central Alberta. Christian education is provided from K-12. A copy of the church profile is available.

Please send inquires and/or personal profiles in confidence to
Wm. Wildeboer (email **wilel@telus.net**)
or Wayne Bouwman (**bouwmanwj@telus.net**),
or mail to church address:
Bethel CRC,
5704-51 Ave Lacombe, Alberta, Canada T4L 1K8

The Back to God Hour

Announces the search for the following positions:

DIRECTOR OF THE BACK TO GOD HOUR

ENGLISH LANGUAGE MINISTRY LEADER

Suggestions of potential candidates and applications for either position should be submitted to

Back to God Hour Search Committee
Attn: Rev. Allen Petroelje, Chairman
203 Decker
Fremont MI 49412
alpetroelje@sbcglobal.net

Electronic filing is encouraged. Information regarding the positions can be obtained at **www.btgh.org** or **www.crcna.org**. Candidates are urged to submit applications by August 31, 2005. The committee will begin considering applications at that time. The search will continue until the positions are filled.

In keeping with the CRC Equal Opportunity Policy, persons who are members of a minority group or ethnic community are encouraged to apply.

FIRST HAMILTON CRC

in downtown Hamilton
has openings for three part-time staffing positions.

- (1) **Pastor of Visitation:** The primary focus will be to the elderly and shut-ins of our congregation. Availability to conduct visitations during the day is preferred. This position is ideally suited for a retired ordained pastor.
- (2) **Visiting Preacher:** An ordained pastor is required to preach 18-24 times per year. Preference will be given to those who embrace the Reformed tradition and who are committed to the missional understanding of the church.
- (3) **Worship Coordinator:** This position involves planning & coordinating of our worship services. Knowledge of the Reformed theological tradition and familiarity with various music genres is required.

Each of these positions is for 1-2 years. Interested applicants should contact the church office at **(905) 528-3826** or e-mail at **office@firsthamilton.ca** for a complete job description or further information.

The youth of **SPRINGDALE CHRISTIAN
REFORMED CHURCH**
need a **youth pastor/director**.

Springdale CRC is a congregation committed to the Reformed faith, located 10 minutes west of Newmarket, Ontario. The successful candidate will possess abilities to provide leadership to the church's ministry program for teens and young adults, and will show a strong desire to build relational ministries within the youth.

Interested applicants are asked to call John Olthof of the Search Committee at **905-939-870** or email:

the_search_committee@hotmail.com
or fax # **905-939-9385**

Check out our website: **www.christiancourier.ca** for job opportunities recently published in CC.



REDEEMER
University College

Redeemer University College invites applications for tenure-track positions, beginning in July 2006, in the following departments:

Department of Religion/Theology

The successful candidate will be prepared to teach introductory courses in two or more of the following: Bible, Christian worldview, and systematic theology.

Department Of Music

The successful candidate will be prepared to teach a wide range of undergraduate courses in music theory and music literature.

Department Of Psychology

Candidates will be applying for a tenure-track position in Experimental Psychology

As a liberal arts and sciences university college rooted in the Reformed tradition of Christianity, we seek candidates who are committed to teaching and pursuing scholarship from this perspective. Applicants should possess, or be near completion of, a Ph.D. Interested applicants should submit a curriculum vitae, three letters of reference, and a one-page or two-page statement describing their own faith commitment and how it shapes their academic work. The deadline for applications is **September 30, 2005** or until the position is filled.

Direct general inquiries and applications to:
Dr. Jacob P. Ellens, Vice-President (Academic)
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada
jellens@redeemer.on.ca

www.redeemer.on.ca

Redeemer University College offers equal employment opportunities to qualified applicants. In accordance with Canadian Immigration requirements, Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be considered first for this position.

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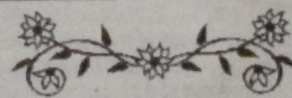
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to supply its newly built church. Please help us out!
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or by email at: geankoopmans@bulkley.net
Mailing address: Faith Reformed Church of Telkwa,
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

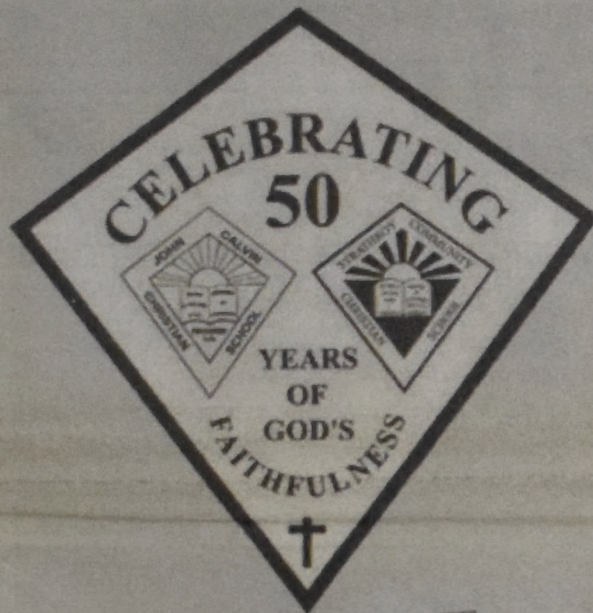
Sep 10 Strathroy Christian School 50th anniversary celebration. For more info, see ad this issue.

Sept 11 - Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Hellinga will be preaching.

Oct 1 & 2 BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, **Newmarket**, Ontario. 50th anniversary week-end of celebration. Former member and friends invited. To obtain tickets to attend the Saturday dinner and for more information, call John VanLeeuwen at 905-775-0367 Ph., 905-775-8295 Fax, or jvanle0431@rogers.com. See ad this issue.

Oct 15 Netherlands Bazaar, **Thornhill** Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Avenue, **Thornhill**. Market Place 10:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. Features: Restaurants with Dutch delicacies, live music, bake-sale, groceries, Delft Blue pottery, gifts, handicrafts, Draw and Auction 6:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. Admission free. For information call 905-477-1243 or 416-223-5026

September 10, 2005



On
September 10th, 2005,
**STRATHROY
COMMUNITY
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**
(formerly John
Calvin Christian
School) will be
celebrating
50 years of
"providing quality
Christ-centred
education" in the
Strathroy area.

The day will include the following:
• Open House - 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm
• Beef/Pork on a bun @ 5:00 pm
• Bring a lawn chair
• Program in gym @ 7:30 pm
• Dessert @ 9:00 pm

There will be a 50th Anniversary Book available for purchase. More information can be obtained by phoning the school (519-245-1934) or checking our website at www.sccs.ca



For more information about this celebration, please call 519-245-1934 or visit us on the web at www.sccs.ca

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If so...

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at 10:30 am

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contact Chaplain Graham E. Morbey
gmorbey@wlu
519-886-1474

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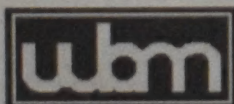
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INVITATION TO OUR 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

With thankfulness to God we will celebrate our
50th anniversary **October 1 & 2, 2005**. D.V.

A dinner will be held on Saturday October 1, 2005 at 4.30 pm,
followed by a social evening at the church.

Sunday morning we will have a celebratory service of
thanksgiving, with coffee and cake followed by a luncheon.
Old members and friends are invited to celebrate with us on this
weekend. Some billeting will be available.

To obtain tickets to attend the Saturday dinner and for more information please call John VanLeeuwen at (Ph) 905-775-0367,
or fax 905-775-8295. Email: jvanle0431@rogers.com

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■ Tuesday, September 20, 2005

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■ Wednesday, September 21, 2005

Toronto District Christian High School — Toronto

King's Christian Collegiate — Oakville

C U eh?

■ Thursday, September 22, 2005

Smithville District Christian High School — Smithville

Beacon Christian High School — St. Catharines

■ Friday, September 23, 2005

Hamilton District Christian High School — Hamilton

■ Monday, September 26, 2005

Woodland District Christian Secondary School — Breslau

London District Christian Secondary School — London

■ Tuesday, September 27, 2005

Chatham Christian High School — Chatham

Marantha Christian Academy — Windsor